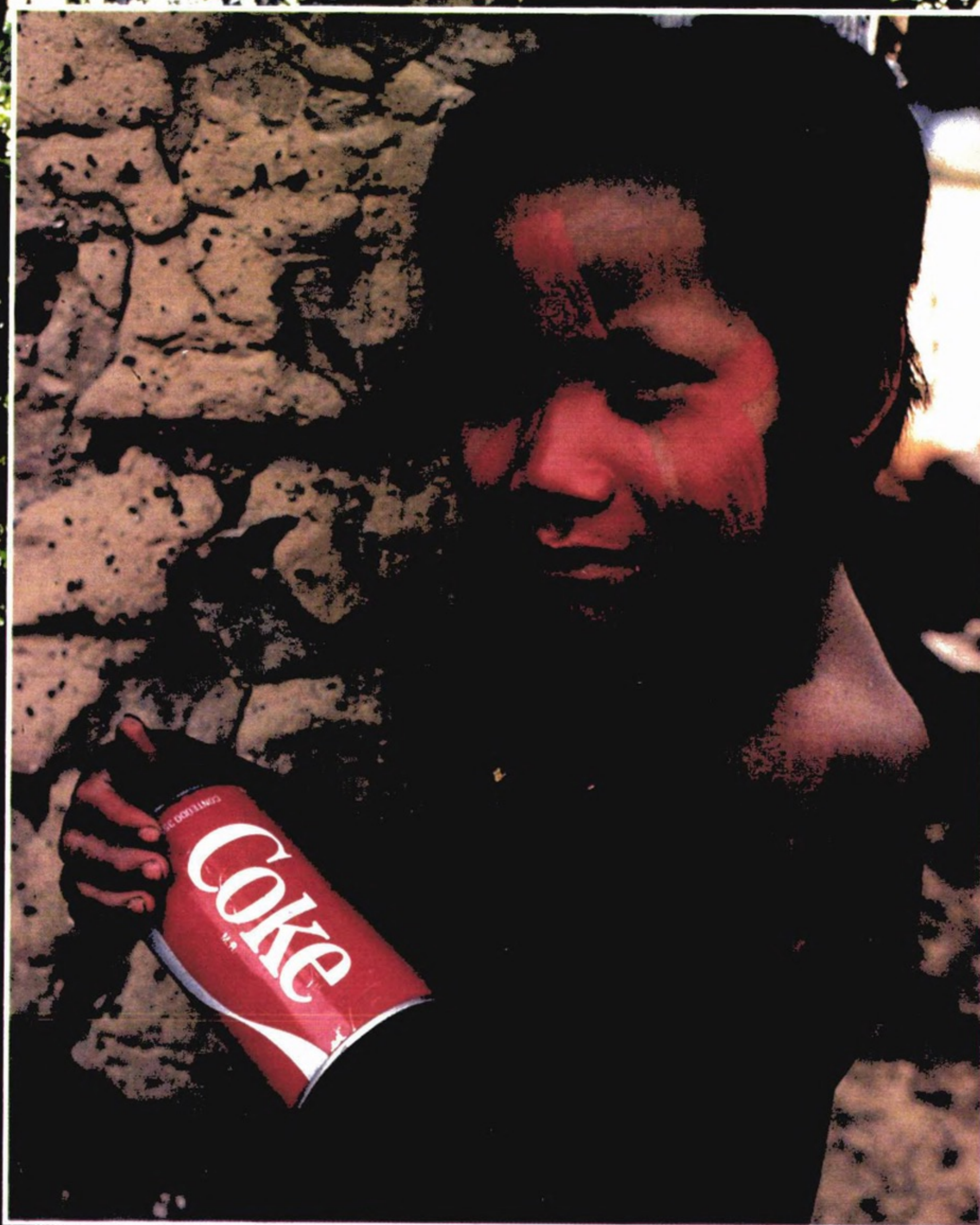
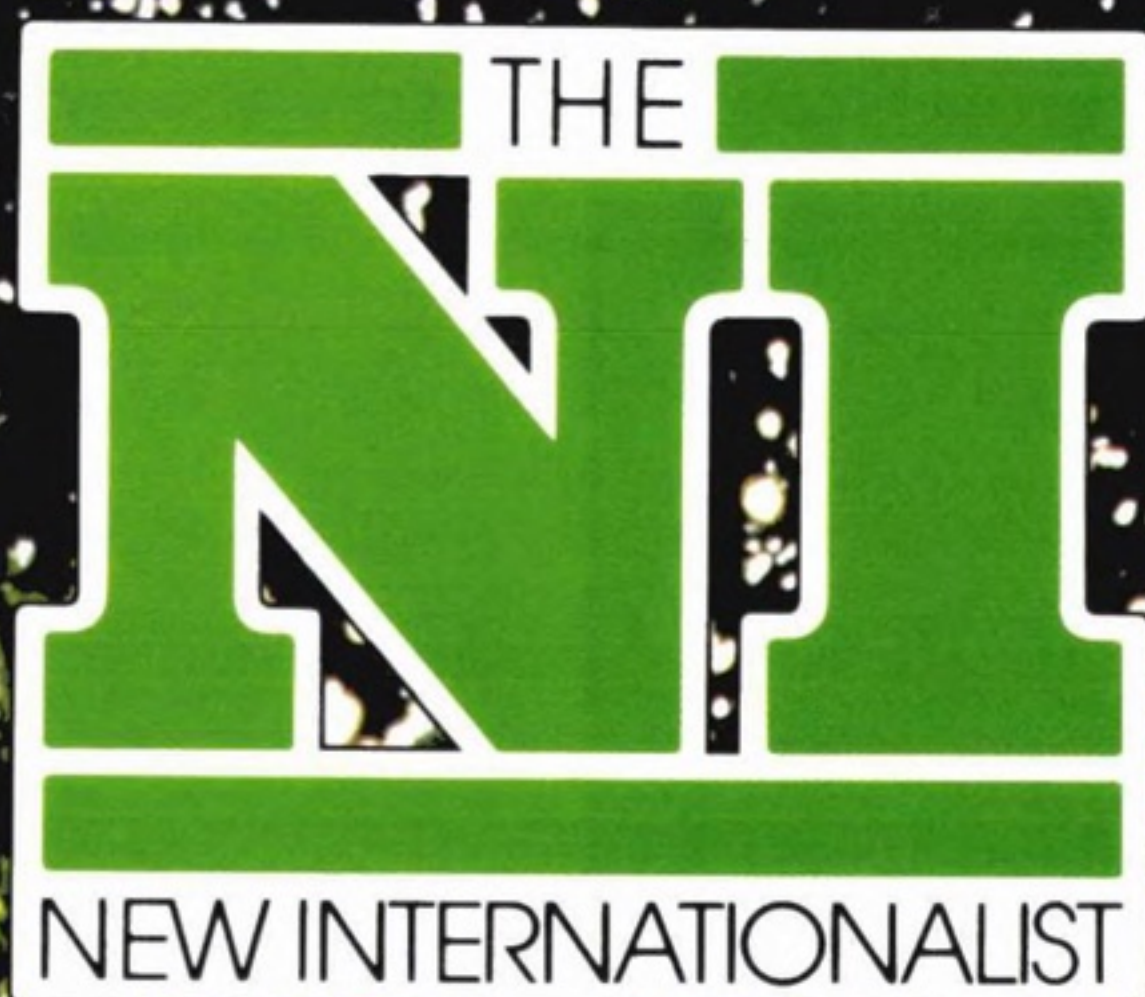


No. 219 MAY 1991 MONTHLY UK £1.50  
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The **NI** magazine is edited, produced and sold by New Internationalist Publications Ltd which is co-operatively run by:-

Vanessa Baird, Chris Brazier, Wayne Ellwood, Alan Hughes, Guy Montgomery, Gill Moore, Clive Offley, David Ransom, James Rowland, Sue Shaw, Kate Stott, Richard Swift, Dexter Tiranti, Jim Turner, Troth Wells.

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**UK:** 55 Rectory Road, Oxford OX4 1BW. Tel. (0865) 728181. Fax. (0865) 793152.

**Canada:** 1011 Bloor Street West, Toronto, Ontario M6H 1M1. Tel. (416) 588 6478.

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### MAILINGS

Occasionally we agree to exchange our subscribers' names with organizations whose aims are broadly in line with our own. If you do not wish to receive their material please write to your subscription office.

Cover and UK inside pages printed by Pindar Graphics, Scarborough, North Yorkshire.

North American inside pages printed in Canada by Webcom, Scarborough, Ontario.

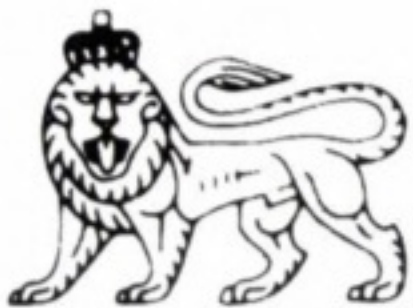
The **NI** is distributed to the UK news trade by Magnum Distribution, 22-26 Farringdon Lane, London EC1R 3AU. Tel. (071) 253 3456. Fax. (071) 608 0726.

The **NI** in North America (USPS 329-770) is published monthly by New Internationalist Publications, 1011 Bloor Street West, Toronto, Ontario, Canada M6H 1M1 with assistance from the Canadian International Development Agency. US 2nd class postage paid at Lewiston, NY. US Post-master send address changes to: The **NI**, P O Box 1143, Lewiston, NY 14092. US Office of Publication, Lewiston, NY 14092. Registered with Alternative Press Index.

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**I**f you don't sure, don't start! If you sure, make stop!' I read this cryptic and forbidding advice on the back of a child's T-shirt in the tiny airport of Cruzeiro do Sul. I am frightened by flying and by forests at night. Yet there I was, about to set out on another alarming flight through the turbulent air above the largest and most intimidating forest of them all – the Amazon. It was one of many times I felt unequal to the perverse challenge this magazine often presented.

You might think this is an odd subject for us to tackle. It concerns a place (the Amazon) rather than a country; a thing (the rainforest) rather than people; an issue (deforestation) that has, perhaps, received more than its fair share of media attention already. Generally we prefer to search out subjects that are neglected by the rest of the media – like Vietnam, which we covered in February.

Yet it is also, I think, quite timely. If Vietnam turned out to be a lesson in the failure of old-style communism, the Amazon shows up the quite awful state of affairs in the free market Third World. For many of the people who live there national boundaries are an artificial imposition. The same is true for the environment. By taking a closer look at the environment and the people I felt we might fill a big

gap in the usual media coverage. The Amazon is too often painted in the exotic, romantic colours of tragic catastrophe. But there's an awful lot of it left and no shortage of people willing to protect it – when they are not being brutalized or ignored. Far better, I thought, to look for life, rather than death, in the rainforest.

Lack of time and money meant I could only visit one of the nine countries of the Amazon. That had to be Brazil, where most of it is. But I was always aware of the fact that there must be many things I was missing. For example, I never heard a baby cry and no-one ever begged money off me in Brazil. I think only two of the people I talked to were older than 60 – the place is so full of children you can easily forget that they don't live very long. I was often very uncomfortable, but never actually sick – although my eardrums never quite got used to the constant, shattering human din of Brazil. But then my return to London was hardly comfortable or reassuring. I stepped out of a deserted London airport into bitter winter cold, the middle of the Gulf war and the path of an on-coming tank. I suddenly felt tempted to seek asylum in Brazil.

Although I've done much of the writing, the magazine is far from being all my own work. Alex Shankland and Anna Feuchtwang have written pieces because they were both, at different times, as much a part of the experience as I was. There is always a 'second' editor, in this case Vanessa, who gave me ideas for the 'visuals' and helped make the whole thing more readable. And there is always a

designer, in this case Clive, who also did many of the illustrations for this issue. Both designer and second editor, quite by chance, had been in the Amazon which I think has made the result more accurate, less completely subjective.

Then there were the organizations which gave me help – in the UK especially the Gaia Foundation and Oxfam. In Brazil the Union of Indigenous Nations (UNI), the National Council of Rubber Tappers in Cruzeiro do Sul, the Federation of Organizations for Social and Educational Assistance (FASE) and the Movement of Rural and Urban Women contributed a great deal. Above all Alex Shankland shepherded me towards my most telling experiences, and a better understanding of them, with great patience. I am deeply indebted to him.

What the people of the Amazon want most, however, is not gratitude but change. The interest that we – you the readers – take in their hard struggle to achieve it gives them greater strength. I am still, however, left with a keen sense of how impossibly ambitious it is to try and do them, and the magical place they inhabit, the justice they deserve and rarely get.

*David Ransom.*

David Ransom  
for the New Internationalist Co-operative

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## Taking the Michael

Hey punters, inspired by your issue *Starve trek* (NI 218) I've got a great idea for a magazine about sexual politics. It will trace the miraculous evolution of Tarzan from a brutal and sexist ape to a



sensitive and highly aware man through a traumatic period during which he is unable to hold down a job and can only grunt, beat people up, swing around in trees and talk to the animals. The story will tell how this immature and sexist body builder makes the miraculous passage to real manhood with the help of a chimpanzee, a men's group and a transvestite called Jane. We'll call it 'Tarzan - the New Man'. What say you?

Mary Jackson  
London, UK

## Chain reaction

Congratulations on your excellent *Test-tube coup* (NI 217). Readers may like to add to the list of useful addresses that of Feminist International Network of Resistance to Reproductive and Genetic Engineering (FINRAGE), International Co-ordination, PO Box 20 19 03, D-200 Hamburg 20, Germany. We have biotechnology contacts in 36 countries and can supply readers with the address of any national contact.

Frances Hutchinson  
Keighley, UK

## Seedy possibility

One issue which seems to rise naturally from your *Biotechnology* issue (*Test-*

**NI** welcomes your letters. But please keep them short. They may be edited for purposes of space or clarity. Include a home telephone number if possible and send your letters to the nearest editorial office. The address is inside the front cover.

*tube coup* NI 217) is the possibility that Africa's peasant farmers are saving seed crop from their hybrid 'green revolution' seed types. This has always been the basic practice of farming, and farmers must naturally be tempted to retain seed from such a miraculous crop. Yet hybrid seeds are infertile. This must be difficult to explain to farmers. I even wonder if it might be an unrecognised cause of famine in Africa.

W A Pritchard  
Gwynedd, Wales

## Curious courage

The *Letter from Tamil Nadu* makes me almost despair of the human race (NI 217). What is the use of trying to help the oppressed people of the world if they admire their oppressors and say 'Oh, aren't they brave?' So brave of Saddam Hussein, wasn't it, to order his planes to drop nerve gas on Kurdish villagers and massacre 4,000 defenceless people? So brave to shout defiantly 'I'll make Kuwait a blood bath,' and from his deep bunker, to order his soldiers to slaughter Kuwaiti civilians?

I wish Germans and Japanese who remember the Second World War would remind Iraq how they climbed out of the humiliation of defeat, not by swearing revenge, but by repudiating their militarism

to become in consequence more prosperous and more respected in the world.

Marian Laring  
Isle of Wight, UK

## Sanctimonious sic

One of the more irritating features of NI is the sanctimonious 'sic' which occurs beside each and every example of sexist language - even when the quote is obviously from a time when terminology was exclusively male. The least you could do is be consistent. Why no sic beside Chris Brazier's 'She Who Would Valiant Be' sung to his Vietnamese companions on the road to Hue (*After the storm* NI 216)?

John Durell  
Huddersfield, UK

## Trading block

I have been reading with great interest your issue on Vietnam (NI 216). As Chairman of the Executive Committee of Medical and Scientific Aid for Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia, I find much to commend in the magazine and hope that as a result something will be done to stop the US Government, followed meekly by the British Government, from continuing its economic embargo on trade with Vietnam, years after the end of the war.

E J Shellard  
Hounslow, UK

## Happy poverty

How your issue on Vietnam (NI 216) brought back memories of my visit in 1987. Like Chris, I started in Hanoi and finished in Saigon, and most of the places mentioned were familiar to me. The photos taken on my last morning in Saigon sum up memories of this lovely country - the 'Land of Smiles'. I believe that the Vietnamese people aren't happy in spite of being poor but precisely *because* they do not have much material wealth, which enables them to appreciate the real quality of life. It will be a terrible shame if this country is ruined by Western-style development and commercialism.

Peter B Hardy  
Sale, UK

## Torture victims

As a member of Amnesty International I was disturbed that your Vietnam issue (NI 216) contained virtually no mention about human rights abuses in that country, and that the editor seemed unconcerned that the Vietnamese Government is strongly resisting moves towards multi-party democracy. Many people in Vietnam continue to be imprisoned because of their criticism of the regime and they have been tortured while in detention. I am surprised that you did not raise this issue in your magazine.

C Young  
Southampton, UK

## Kill your own

Possibly because you people are such dyed-in-the-wool city-dwellers, the most obvious way of combating the evil of factory farming was not even mentioned in issue NI 215 (*Animal Rights and Wrongs*): moving back to the land, raising one's own livestock humanely and butchering them oneself.

This enables the consumer to know what she cannot know otherwise - namely that the meat she eats has come from an animal that was well cared for and killed with minimal suffering.

Bruce Inksetter  
Quebec, Canada





## Rational love

I would like to protest at the last two paragraphs of Celia Kitzinger's otherwise excellent article on 'Sex, beauty and beasts' (NI 215). Certainly there are links between the way in which men exercise power over animals and the way they exercise power over women. But why should it be seen as part of a feminist analysis to attack male writers for emphasising that there is a 'rational basis' for the animal liberation movement?

Pity and sentiment are a proper and important part of our attitudes towards animals. But when I wrote *Animal Liberation* I stressed the rational basis of the movement, because at the time it was too easy for the great majority of the population to dismiss concern for animals as something that was fine for animal lovers, but had nothing to do

with them.

The terms 'womanish pity', 'feminine sentimentality' and 'womanish sentimentality' to which Celia Kitzinger refers, are not of course used by me, or by Tom Regan, the other male author she mentions. It is therefore cheap and quite unfair of Celia Kitzinger to conclude that Tom Regan and I are 'recycling sexism'. These accusations introduce division into a movement in which women and men have, in my experience, generally worked harmoniously and very much on equal terms.

P Singer, Monash University,  
Victoria, Australia

## Reforming hunks

George Lewis' letter cries out for rebuttal (Letters NI 215). Men choose the 'dangerous, brutalizing' jobs because we also choose to be the dominant power-brokers in soci-

ety. Men who hate women do so because women are rightly resisting male dominance and abuse. Human salvation lies not in women having 'the generosity and sensitivity to share their lives with us' but in our accepting our own vulnerabilities and weaknesses, and sharing, for the first time mostly, our lives with women. We need to become whole persons, not macho combatants. Until we do this, we are going to remain emotionally lobotomized, paranoid automatons living nasty, brutish and shorter (than women's) lives, victimizing anyone weaker than ourselves.

Peter Moore,  
Prairies Men's Network,  
Emerson, Canada

## Reggae hype

The Country Profile of Jamaica (NI 213) gives the misleading impression that Jamaica is a land of reggae and

Rastafarianism. I was disappointed to find on arrival in 1983 that reggae took a back seat when Michael Jackson and Bonnie Tyler were on the air. I heard more Bob Marley during a term at the University College of North Wales than in a whole year at Kingston – even though Tuff Gong Studios were just down the road.

Rastafarianism was practised by less than five per cent of the population. And while most Jamaicans were preoccupied by slavery, they preferred to go to the US in search of American soap opera lifestyles rather than to Africa. The profile would have told us more if it had concentrated on the real issue in Jamaica – the escape from poverty.

A J Roby  
Watford, Herts

 The views expressed on the letters pages are not necessarily those of the NI.

## LETTER FROM TAMIL NADU



## Dying for glory

**Soldiers get blown to bits for it. Politicians thrive on it. Poets wax lyrical about it. Mari Marcel Thekaekara reports on India's rising tide of patriotism.**

As a child, I was appalled by the poem, *The Charge of the Light Brigade*. Our poetry teacher, a romantic and ardent patriot, adored Tennyson. Her voice filled the room, vibrant, charged with emotion: 'Was there a man dismay'd? Not tho' the soldiers knew someone had blundered'.

Everything in me rebelled against the futility of that line. But in patriotic, poetic Bengal such sentiments were put down immediately as traitorous glimmerings of a subversive mind. Most people adored the rhetoric. It was a favourite in every elocution contest.

It takes very little to breathe patriotism into people. In Britain during the Falklands War I watched normal youngsters transformed into bloodthirsty little monsters. 'Blood for blood,' the children screamed and stomped around whooping for joy at each new Argentinian defeat. 'Do you realize that victory or defeat are euphemisms for dead soldiers? Each one with a grieving family?' I asked. 'Annihilate the Argentinians. Rule Britannia. We'll finish the Falklands,' were the hysterical responses. Television and newsprint had done their bit. War hysteria gripped all but the minority of hardcore pacifists.

Closer to home, for months now, there have been war clouds hovering ominously over our heads. Television reports, video news, magazines and newspaper headlines carry reports of Pakistani aggression. The politicians and mullahs need a war to divert attention from their domestic problems. It's an old story: history repeating itself.

A few months ago Indian journalists who visited Pakistan in the euphoria of the much vaunted Rajiv-Benazir romance, waxed eloquent about how ordinary Pakistanis in the street hugged them with tears of joy, welcoming them with nostalgia for the old homeland of pre-Independence days. The ordinary Pakistani has relatives in India. But power games continue to be played by politicians and preachers. And ordinary people pay the price.

'Oh God, I can't bear the Pakistanis to win,' announced my five year old son with all the inherent agony possible at his age. He was

referring to cricket not war, having recently been converted. But the intensity of his declaration knocked me out, an obvious result of the aggressive atmosphere around him.

'Who are these Pakistanis?' I asked, confident there was nothing of the child prodigy in him as far as his geography went. 'It doesn't matter,' he muttered, exasperated. 'We have to win, not they.'

I was appalled at the way he was already becoming conditioned: I had expected him to be insulated from such talk by our family and friendship circle. Yet the current carries us all. Like a massive tidal wave, it sweeps us along in spite of logic, reason and the experience of years. Patriotism takes over. I remember feeling indignation and anger at a US senator's insistence for the UN (read US) to step in and decide the Kashmir question for us. Who the hell do they think they are anyway? was my instant reaction. That's only a short step away from 'We should teach the Pakistanis a lesson once and for all'. Which is the kind of attitude that becomes common in every Indo-Pakistani flare up.

In 1971 we had God on our side and the reality of millions of refugees pouring into Calcutta. Genocide in Bangladesh. Now the Pakistanis are pouring into Kashmir. The opposition stirs up more trouble trying to get maximum political mileage out of it. And no matter how hard one tries, clear thinking and objectivity disappear.

I always laughed at US paranoia about Soviet aggression, and the argument that US defence budgets had to keep escalating to save the world from Communism and Russian expansionism. But recently in New Delhi, the tables turned when our own budget was presented.

As budgets go it was fairly sensible, taxing luxury goods and upper income groups, subsidizing farmers and giving relief to poorer sections. No eyebrows were raised that the defence outlay has gone up by a staggering 1,250 crores (\$450 million). It was expected by everyone, a foregone conclusion. Even the opposition had to concede that with war on our horizon, the increased expenditure is totally justifiable. And I hate to admit this. But I am forced to agree.

If the Pakistanis think we're weak or unprepared they will walk in the way the Chinese did in 1962. So say the generals. It's the same argument that the Americans use to justify Star-Wars and which I have never bought. But I'd hate to think of my children blown to smithereens because of power games in Pakistan. So in the end pretensions to pacifism have to be jettisoned. It's back to Tennyson. No one can reason why. Soldiers have to die. Someone always blunders.

Mari Marcel Thekaekara has been working for the last seven years on a project she and her husband started for native people in the south Indian state of Tamil Nadu.



# THE AMAZON

**The rainforest and its people are caught in a cycle of destruction. David Ransom embarks on a journey to find out why.**

## THIRST FOR JUSTICE

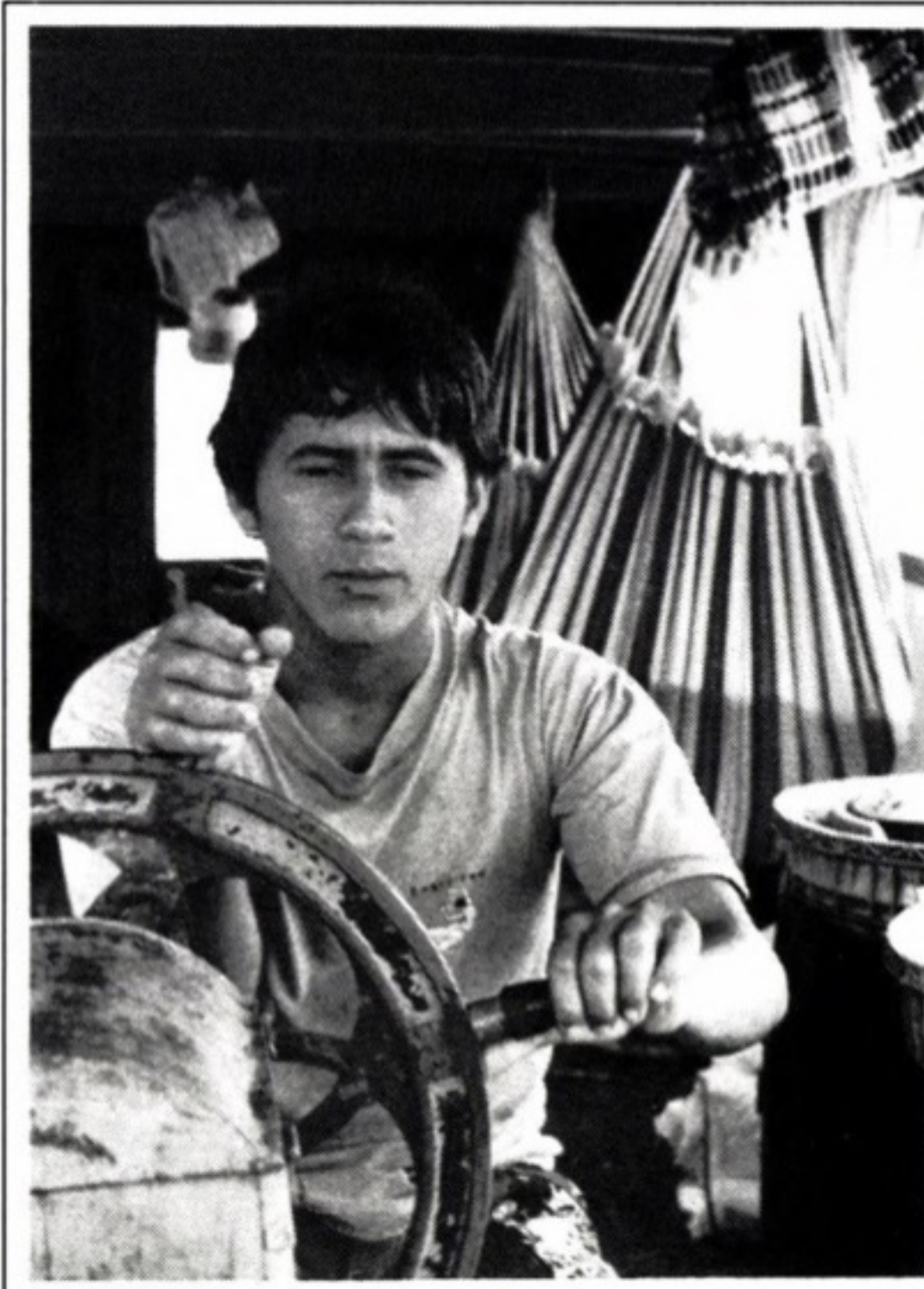


Photo : David Ransom

**T**HE *Chico Mendes* is a beautiful Amazon river boat, named in defiant memory of the rubber tappers' leader who was assassinated two years ago.

But it is also a bomb. Stored in the bow are six huge barrels of diesel oil. They fill the boat with fumes. Some of my companions are sitting on them smoking cigarettes. Overhead, lightning bolts flick from dark clouds like the tongue of a snake scenting its prey. I light my pipe, reasoning that this is the most pleasurable way to face an explosive end to an expedition that hasn't yet begun.

All too often I've heard the Amazon rainforest talked of as if it contained no people. That false belief has made much mischief in the past and seems in danger of doing so again now. People have lived in the forest for thousands of years. If it is finally being destroyed then it's not destroying itself. People are doing that. I want to find out why. To do that I need to know who they are and what they think of the forest they live with.

So here I am on the waterfront of Cruzeiro do Sul. This is the most westerly town in Brazil – dozing quietly away since the First World War and the end of the Great Brazilian Rubber Boom – in a part of the country that until 1903 belonged to Bolivia and Peru. It's slap in the middle of the forest and incredibly remote – 'off the map' was the expression they used in Rio de Janeiro.

We're headed for the Upper Juruá Valley Extractive Reserve. It is two and a half days away by boat – 45 minutes and \$1,000 by one of the rare private planes or air taxis that fly there. 'Much prefer the romance of the boat', I think smugly to myself.

Until, that is, the motors start up. Imagine yourself locked in a coffin with

two pneumatic drills and you will have just some idea of what it is like to travel on the *Chico Mendes*. It is impossible to talk. Of Amazonian wildlife I can expect to see nothing at all. Only the vultures circle undisturbed over Cruzeiro do Sul.

Darkness promptly falls. The idea is that we should travel through the night. Zé the skipper is an obliging man, a middle-aged *ribeirinho* (someone who lives by the river and makes a living from it) who knows what he's doing. His young *motorista* Evilásio must love the huge outboard motors dearly if he's prepared to stand anywhere near them. But we have only a small electric bulb to light our way ahead. Zé soon tires, takes us into the bank and repairs to his hammock.

For a few minutes we swing in our hammocks in silence; just the sound of river water lapping against the boat, frogs croaking, the occasional enigmatic grunt and rustle from the forest. It shines with a thousand fireflies, like a dark audience carrying candles.

But for Leonardo and Tonhão this is all too much. They are 'technicians' being sent up river by the National Council of Rubber Tappers in Cruzeiro. They have to sort out some small local difficulties in

the Reserve without getting themselves shot – the odds are even, I'd say. Leonardo is large and powerful, with a menacing stare. I think he's taken against me. Tonhão is thin, with a crooked little finger. Silenced by the motors, ill at ease with the absence of noise and no doubt a bit on edge, they burst into farts, jokes and giggles that slowly spread through the boat. Macedo, the boss, remonstrates with them to no avail.

So he takes the helm. Moisés starts the outboard motors. He's the son of a Kampa Indian chief returning to his people after helping an anthropologist in São Paulo with her translations. Like me, he's just a little bit aloof. We blast off again into the night, effectively dispatching Leonardo and Tonhão back into silent submission.

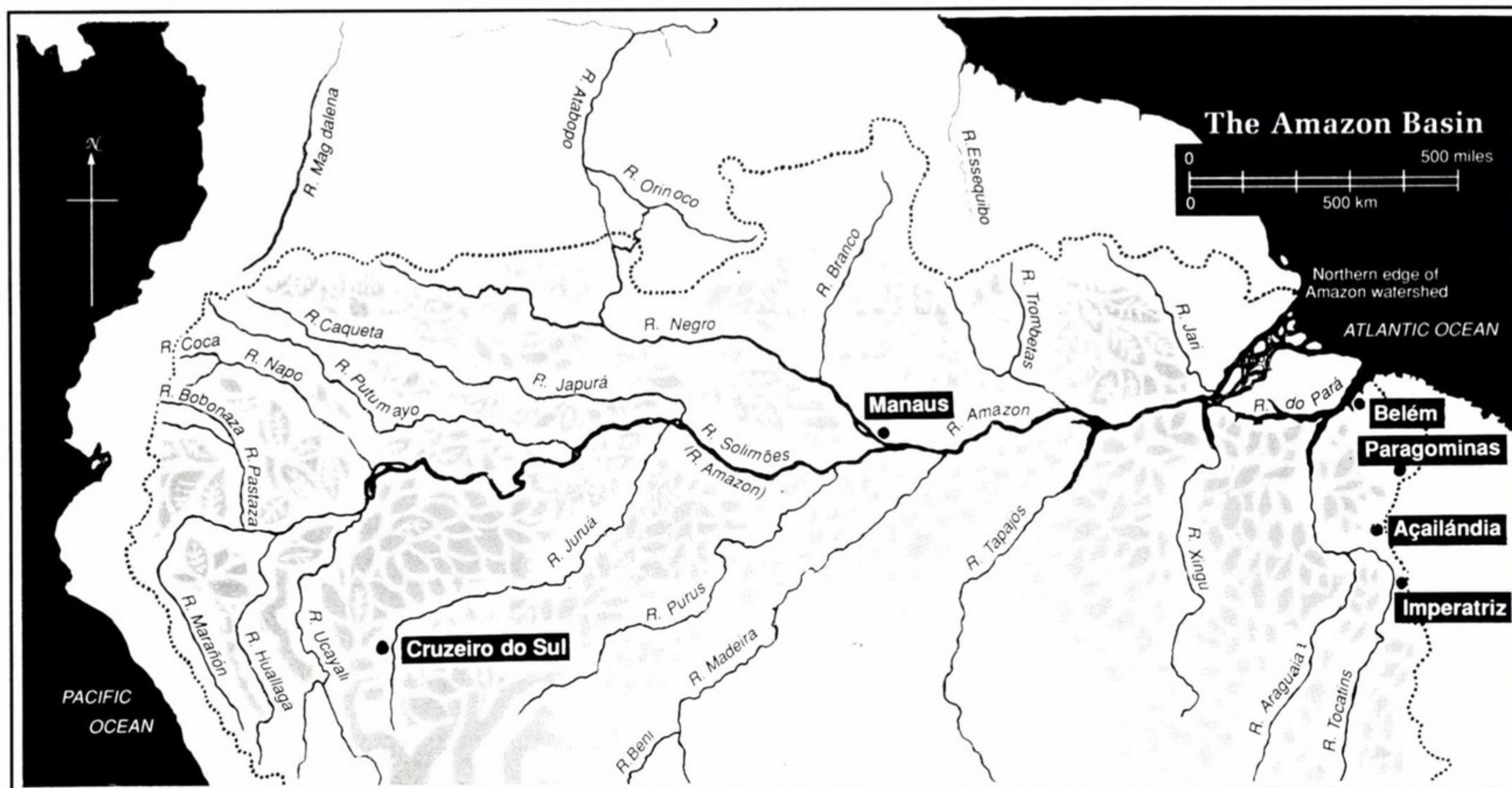
Thus they remain, even when we run aground. No-one stirs from their hammocks. To my alarm, Moisés jumps overboard into what I take to be the piranha-infested waters of the river. But I am never to see a piranha in the Amazon, not even a dead one. Half an hour later Moisés has pushed us off the sandbank and climbed safely back on board. And so, I suppose, I drift into fitful sleep.

The first light of Amazonian dawn comes through a thick mist. The great forest slowly looms out of the darkness. Majestic giants, buttressed like the columns of a chaotic temple, spread at their summit into perfect vaults over a tangle of palms, vines and creepers. Every shade of green I know, and more I've never seen, flash around the coloured specks of flowering trees and orchids. Above them all the *samauma*, an awe-some tree shaped like a mushroom cloud.

'Pull over!' calls Macedo.

On the bank is a black man hailing the *Chico Mendes*. As we lodge in the mud a





dozen people descend the river bank to the boat. Blond children and dark adults alike are subdued – perhaps by apprehension and, to judge by the terrible grey pall of malnutrition that hangs over them, hunger. In their midst, supported on their shoulders, is a man who moans distractedly. He has a deep, circular wound in his leg.

One of our number is Marinilza Poyanawa, a young Indian health worker funded by the London-based Health Unlimited. So far all I've noticed is her child-like laughter but now her calm competence takes over. She says he has gonorrhoea, untreated for two years. He is literally falling apart. As he does so his family loses the labour of an adult that it cannot do without. We head for the nearest medical post, several hours up river.

'It's only because that man had the nerve to call us across that we found out', says Macedo. 'There's plenty more sickness we've been passing without even knowing it. They should have taken him down to Cruzeiro long ago and demanded treatment. How to overcome the attitudes that go with a century of exploitation – that's our biggest problem. Take my father. Fifty years a rubber tapper and he has nothing. The older he gets the poorer he becomes. That's wrong.'

Captivated by the forest I've ignored the wooden houses on stilts thatched with palms that line the banks at regular intervals, where the children, always blond, come out to watch us pass. Here the rubber tappers live, the people of this rubber-rich part of the forest. They were lured from the poverty of Brazil's North East by the rubber boom and the vision of a better life that haunts the imagination of Brazil – and of the North East in particular. Here they have lived for a century in bondage first to the rubber barons and now to

almost complete neglect, with a life expectancy of less than 50 bitter years. Seventy per cent of them cannot read. They have no doctors, roads, electricity. They pay for their debts with their lives.

But this is no casual neglect. It is entirely constructed. People like Macedo – or his inspiration Chico Mendes – who talk of solidarity, who spin their own philosophy into a weapon and dare to hold out hope, are done away with. Two attempts on Macedo's life have been made already. No-one bothers to conceal who is behind it – the hated *patrões*, the 'barons', once of rubber, now of drugs and hardwood. These local agents of a mighty power flaunt their wealth not in secret but in the midst of terrible, debilitating poverty – their closest ally.

Macedo must have been designed for his job as co-ordinator, bolted together as he seems to be from the parts of different people: legs bowed and back bent as if by the weight of physical labour; sharp eyes

peering out from metal-framed spectacles that give him a vaguely intellectual air; a restless, fluid mouth quick to smile or chuckle, the only punctuation in an endless flow of home-spun philosophy. Shrewd. He describes himself as something akin to a vagabond, and I wonder if he is ever afraid.

'Yes. I am afraid that the people of the forest may one day just give up and leave for the towns. If they do that there will be no-one left to defend the forest, and no forest left for anyone to defend. The death of Chico Mendes came as a terrible blow to those of us who knew him, militants in the movement. But there's no denying it brought international attention to the forest and what is happening to its people. That has helped us.'

I ask him if there isn't a danger of his slipping into the role of a boss himself. 'That's the mentality we're fighting against. People put you on a pedestal. They think you're a *patrão*, only a better



**Deafened but not defeated: the Chico Mendes and company. From left to right: Moisés, Leonardo, Evilásio, Alex, Cris, Marinilza, Zé, Tonhão, Macedo, Rena.**

Photo : David Ransom



## THE FOREST

### Jungle of myths

How much do you know about the Amazon rainforest? And how much of it is true? There are a great many false beliefs flying around.

The Amazon rainforest is the 'lungs of the world,' is one of the most common. In fact, the Amazon uses as much oxygen as it produces. Otherwise it would be getting bigger all the time. The rainforest is, however, critical to the climate of the region and its destruction would bring dramatic and unpredictable changes.

'Deforestation of the Amazon by burning is a principal cause of global warming,' is another favourite. If, however the entire Amazon rainforest were burned over the next 20 years it would each year contribute about 20 per cent of the carbon reaching the atmosphere

to produce the 'greenhouse effect'. This would still be less than half the amount produced by the burning of fossil fuels (oil and coal) in the rich world alone.

It is easy to imagine that logging is the biggest cause of deforestation. It is true that logging – particularly of hardwoods like mahogany – often plays a part in starting the clearing process. But clearance for cattle ranching is by far the biggest cause of deforestation.

Now many people assume that this cattle ranching produces beef 'used to make hamburgers in the US'. In reality the Amazon is a net importer of beef. Exporting meat is difficult because foot-and-mouth

disease is endemic in the area. The main use of cattle ranching in the Amazon is as a device for claiming land and for speculation, rather than the production of beef.

'If the forest were cleared the land could feed the hungry,' is still heard these days. But this fails to take account of the fact that the soils of the rainforest are thin and poor. They degrade and erode quickly after clearing. Only a carefully-planned mixture of agriculture and forestry could sustain a large population.

The claim that 'there are too many people in the Amazon today,' is countered by the fact that there are probably no more people living in the forest today than there were at the time of the European invasion in the sixteenth century.

'Landless colonists are to blame for torching the Amazon,' may seem plausible to many – but is untrue. The culprits are overwhelmingly large-scale landowners. Settlers clear smaller areas and cultivate them more intensively.

Finally there is a commonly held belief that 'at this rate the Amazon rainforest will have disappeared by the year 2010'. This is unlikely. The Brazilian Government claims that only five per cent of the forest has been cleared. Some studies suggest a figure of 20 per cent but between 10 and 15 per cent is more probable. Clearing and burning reached a peak in 1987 when there was an exceptionally dry burning season and landowners – fearing agrarian reform – wanted to secure their claim to the land. The pace has slowed down since then but it does not mean that people have stopped suffering.

Sources: *Folha de São Paulo* 23 March 1989, and S Hecht and A Cockburn *The Fate of the Forest*.



Box illustrations: Clive Offley

one. It's an easy trap to fall into. But everyone must be another Chico Mendes. Everyone must be a militant.'

'Want a go?' asks Leonardo from the helm.

Our mutual suspicion has begun to abate. I am to become almost fond of him. 'Don't worry, I'll take care of you', he says, 'otherwise...' and he makes a discouraging diving motion with his hand. We are travelling against a whirling current. It carries entire forest giants on its back. One argument with these and it won't be just Leonardo's hand that makes a diving motion.

The trick is to keep to the relative calm inside the bends, where the current is weaker and there are no logs, without running aground on the sandbanks that lurk there. But to get from one bend to the next you have to cross the turbulent main stream, picking your way between the logs. After a while, and still afloat, I turn for approval from Leonardo to find him fast asleep in his hammock. Looking back down the boat I realize with alarm that *everyone* is fast asleep.

Or so it seems. There are yells from overboard, to one side of the boat. It is

Rena, Marinilza's sister. She is in the dugout canoe we are towing beside us that's the best place to take a bath. I've got too close into the bank and we've been invaded by the dreaded blackfly. This is an Amazonian refinement of the mosquito, more devious because you can't feel it bite, so voracious it leaves a mark larger than its own body. It stays with you, crying out to be scratched, for weeks.

Ahead of us stretches the great Juruá River, a major southern tributary of the Amazon. Its water is called *branco*, or white, because it is thick with the silt-rich sediments of the Andes – part of the newest mountain system on earth. But white it is not. Nearer to the colour of blood, I'd say.

Here, more than 2,000 kilometres from its estuary as the parrot flies (reasonably straight I would hazard from my observations), 3,000 as the river bends, it is still an astonishing sight. Now at the height of the rainy season it runs quick, flat, silent and wide, sweeping through the jungle, scything down the forest as it goes, dropping silt where it slows to form new forest territory. In this way all the myriad plant species of the forest are brought succes-

sively to the river bank to deposit their seeds, before themselves being consumed.

Anything further from an ageless, pristine paradise is hard to imagine. As if to emphasize the point, a huge explosion behind us, exactly where we had been a few minutes earlier, marks the collapse of another forest giant into the river.

What is actually going on around us is a violent, elemental struggle for life; rubber trees whose sap is designed to 'zap' predatory bugs, flowers that trap flies with the lure of a scent that resembles rotting protein, and so on and on in a ruthless round of mutual predations. The idea that people might somehow try to live in 'harmony' with such a place seems to me to have no real meaning. What they have most in common with the forest is their own violent struggle for life.

As the *Chico Mendes* blasts on it is as if I am being led blindfold towards some confusing secret. I have lost all sense of direction along the meandering course of the Juruá. My tired, hungry, bitten, sweating and aching body no longer looks for a spiritual *El Dorado* in the only place where it could possibly still be hiding.

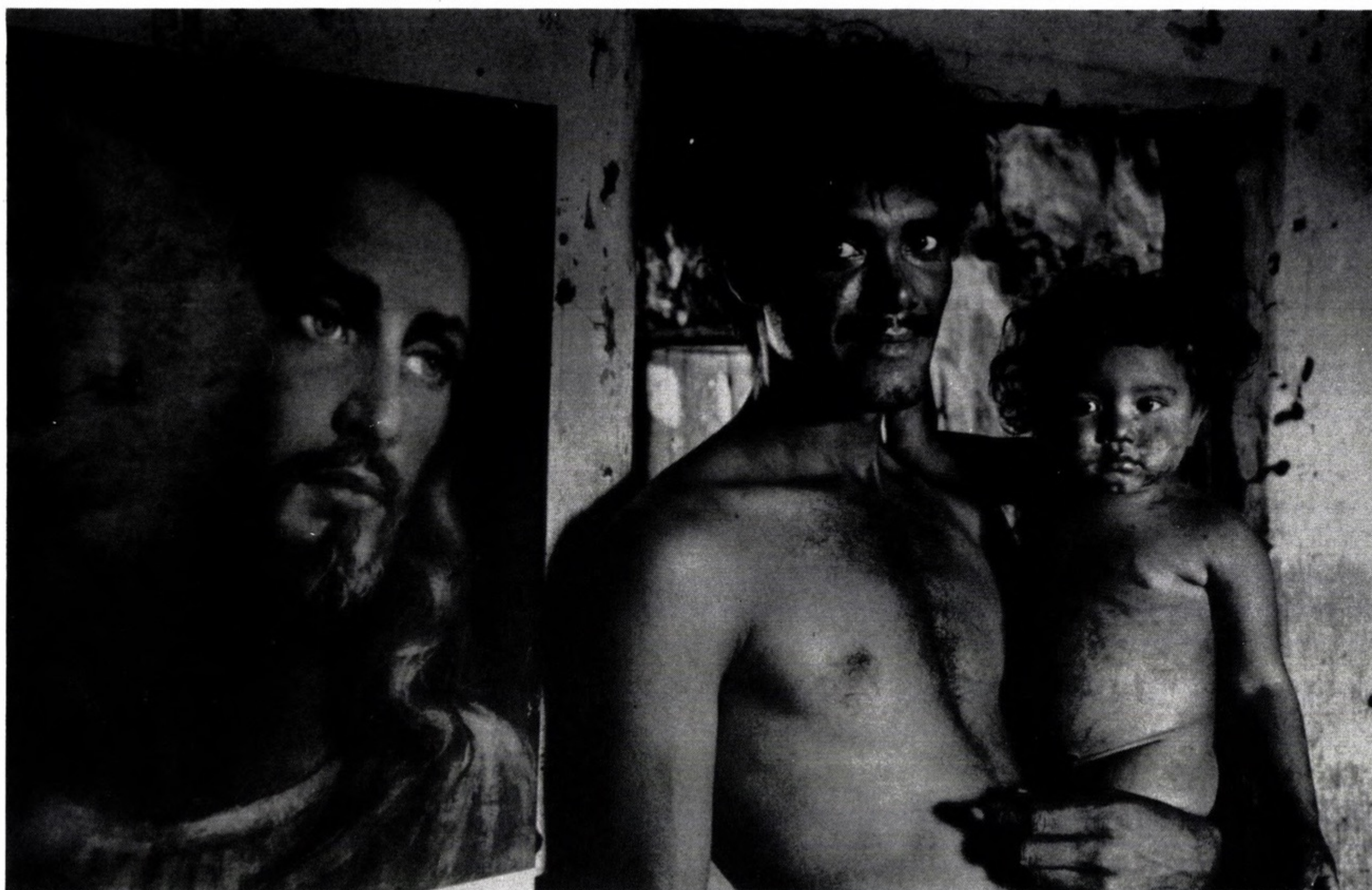
Evilásio, the gentle young *motorista*, tried living in the town and came back to the forest. Macedo grew up in it and can never seem to leave it for good. Marinilza and Moisés both have the look about them of people who are coming home; Leonardo and Tonhão of people arriving in enemy territory. For myself I cannot – do not wish to – abandon a culture that has so far proved unequal to the task of understanding the forest yet is unable to leave it alone.

As darkness falls at the end of our second day's travelling we pull up by wooden steps. The bank of the river conceals what lies beyond it. Leonardo insists that I climb the steps and take a look. The place is called Taumaturgo, and it sits astride a mound at the entrance to the Upper Juruá Valley Extractive Reserve. There is a single main street – a dozen or so houses along a brick path – and a monument to the battle in 1903 when this place passed from Peruvian to Brazilian control. Spent cartridges can reputedly still be found strewn about the town.

I'm a bit puzzled. Taumaturgo at night is not exactly a tourist attraction. Why is Leonardo so insistent that I see it? And where is Macedo? Sitting on chairs outside what looks like an empty café are two young men in smart shorts and trainers. Leonardo greets them, and as we return to the boat explains that these are the same policemen who arrested Macedo without charge a few months earlier. I get the feeling I've been paraded through the town, a sort of totem from the foreign press.

Perhaps I have my uses. As for the forest, having once felt its assault upon my senses I shall never again be able to look upon its destruction with indifference. □





**The people of the Amazon: Salgado's vision.**

**T**HE brilliant Brazilian photographer Sebastião Salgado gets close to his subjects by living with them. The father and child are from Ceará, in the impoverished North East of Brazil. Once they might have looked for a better future from the rubber estates of the Juruá River. Today the lure of good fortune comes more from gold which drew this miner, sculpted in mud, to the Serra Pelada mine. But landlessness pursues the children in Jari whose homes float on the Amazon itself, while a giant wood-pulp factory casts a pall of smoke over the vanishing forest around them.





# Defiance in the forest

The journey continues to the Upper Juruá Valley, where the tappers are at last escaping the grip of the rubber barons.

**C**HICO Jinú walked through the forest for four days to meet Macedo for the first time. A small moon-faced rubber tapper who sometimes wears a beret like Ché Guevara, he is a determined man. He came to the Tejo River (a tributary of the Juruá) with his parents and has lived here ever since. He began rubber tapping when he was nine years old.

'Even as a child I knew that the bosses treated us like slaves', he says. 'When I reached the age of understanding I could see things more clearly. Many of us worked along the Tejo River, but one man sat here and controlled us all. If, say, you used 10 kilos of rubber to pay for medicines instead of giving it to the boss

you'd be thrown out and left with nothing.'

From the early 1980s he became involved with the Union of Rural Workers and then the National Council of Rubber Tappers, of which he is now a vice-president. Chico was instrumental in organizing a *renda* strike – the hated 'tithe' the rubber tappers had to pay to the rubber barons. Their dilapidated warehouses still line up beside the smarter sheds of the Co-operative Association where we are sitting. To my complete astonishment and their eternal credit the British Government donated the sheds where banners with radical slogans are now pinned. A source of some satisfaction to Chico, this.

'We saw fair trading through a co-op

as a way forward, though it's not easy to compete with the big merchants of Cruzeiro. They too feel threatened by us – there have been death threats and sabotage from them as well.'

Steering a course between the death threats and the blandishments of bribery that surround every community leader here is no easy task. Chico admits that some of his comrades have succumbed.

The rubber tappers are stranded without the cultural inheritance of the Indians. Given the chance, won't they sell out to the '*narcotraficantes*' (the drug dealers) and the loggers? Wouldn't you? If the fate of the forest rests with them, what chance has it got?

But finding out how the people of the forest really feel about the choices – or lack of choices – open to them is not always easy. The men may talk but the women are reluctant to express their views. They shy away from all direct approaches. A young woman called Cris has come with us on this trip and she helps me out. She is a bright *paulista* (from São Paulo) of Japanese descent who, like most Brazilians, has never been to the Amazon before. But she knows a thing or two. She used to teach in a 'home' for street kids in São Paulo. One was a diminutive 13-year-old who had shot dead at least eight people who ignored him when he demanded money from them in the street.

But even she has often been met with silence here in the Amazon. Then she finds Arlete Rodrigues Pinheiro, who like Cris is a teacher – something of a rarity in this part of the world. Her face is thin and drawn, she talks softly but firmly, a smile lurking on her lips. She says she would leave if she could, because she's in bad health. But her husband is popular and she will stay with him. She has six children of her own and another she's bringing up for someone else. She joined her sister in the forest when she was in her early teens and has stayed ever since, despite the opposition of her parents. She lives in Restoração, deep in the Reserve along the Tejo River.

'In the old days, with the *patrão* ('baron') we were in debt until the day we died. Now we're not only able to pay off our debts but have a little extra too. Macedo has begun to stop the destruction of the forest. I think he's right. It's good for humanity. You can't take from nature what you don't put back.'

Outside, Macedo and Chico are orchestrating the sale of a batch of rubber. Great balls of latex are brought out from the warehouse and weighed. The community gather round to watch. Macedo makes a record of the transaction, sitting beneath a banner saying: 'The strength of the forest people's labour renews itself day by day'. He wears a camouflaged baseball cap with a British royal badge on it and it's not hard to imagine him as a rubber baron.

I've asked if I can follow a rubber tap-



'Bosses treated us like slaves.' Not now. Justice, like rubber, is being eked out in the Tejo.



per through the forest. We go up the Tejo with Jorge, who lives near its mouth. Dressed up in his working clothes, a bag of tools slung across his shoulders and a beret pulled down over his head, his sharp nose and large eyes somehow make him resemble my image of a forest person.

Antonio de Paula, the accountant of the Association, comes too. He is very small, also wears a baseball cap and is always talking in a high, staccato voice. He is, he says, 'so old as to be almost immortal, in this place anyway'. He's lived in the forest for 40 years.

We meet Jorge's family in their half-finished house in a clearing overlooking a stretch of this breathtaking river – smaller and narrower than the Juruá, the great forest arching over it. For once the sun shines upon it from a clear sky.

Jorge's family look hungry too, and it's not hard to see why. He works a *colocação* of about five square kilometres containing three separate trails of about 180 trees each, which he taps in rotation. It's hard and sometimes dangerous work; the trees are old and he must climb five or more metres up a notched pole to reach productive bark.

'Before it used to cost us one kilo of rubber to buy a kilo of dried milk', says Jorge. 'Now it costs us three kilos of rubber. Many of us have to go out to work on an empty stomach. The trees are old and we can't afford to let them rest as we used to. They are dying.' He hasn't joined the Association yet, but he's thinking about it.

The forest floor is like a carpet – almost entirely free of leaves or mud – and wonderful to walk on. But the forest plants themselves are unexpectedly hard. Imagining a soft, festering swamp, I am startled by the sharp knock of my pipe against what looks like a gentle fern. The stem is like iron.

You come upon things suddenly through the dense undergrowth; a brilliant red pendant flower, a marching column of army ants or, like the base of a sheer rock face sculpted into fine ribs, the trunk of a giant cedar. It is dark but somehow not sinister – I don't expect to find the snakes and jaguars I know still live here. Tracks in the path turn out to be those of a domestic pig.

All the while old Antonio keeps up his commentary. Within 10 minutes we have passed innumerable species of palm, coconut, açai (which bears a delicious fruit), uricuri and jaci (both used for roofing), and paxiuba and paxiubão (whose cork-like bark is used as flooring in rubber-tapper houses). Here is the original cacão palm which, like rubber, originated in the Amazon; there a native papaya; here a tree that produces an antidote for snake bites; there one that helps with stomach complaints. All this knowledge came from the Indians, but, says Antonio, he had to work hard to win it.

Pausing in a clearing, he tells us that like most of the Tejo rubber tappers he

## RUBBER

### Tapping into conservation

A few years ago rubber tappers in the Juruá Valley decided to resist paying the traditional tithe to the rubber estate owners. But they did not leave their protest there. In 1988 they began to campaign for an 'Extractive Reserve' in the Upper Juruá Valley. The first of its kind in the world it was recognized by President José Sarney just before he left office in March 1990.

The idea of an 'Extractive Reserve' was first conceived by members of the National Council of Rubber Tappers. The plan was to set aside a large area of the Upper Juruá Valley where the 6,000 or so rubber tappers of the region could work unhindered by estate owners or other people who are destroying the rainforest.

Rubber-tapping is one of the most environment-friendly of forest activities and it is in the interest of rubber-tappers that the forest be preserved.

The land within the 5,000-square-kilometre Extractive Reserve remains the property of the State. But the right to use it is ceded to people and activities that will cause the least environmental damage. There are now plans for 20 such reserves covering a total area of about 25,000 square kilometres, mostly in the states of Acre, Rondônia and Amapá.

The Upper Juruá Valley is one of the world's most biologically diverse areas of rainforest and this has prompted plans to

develop new forest products, such as forest fruits and fish bred in lakes. The National Council of Rubber Tappers has set up a Co-operative Association to market the Reserve's products and supply essential goods to its 500 or so members at a fair price.

The rubber from the Reserve is sold to processing factories in Cruzeiro do Sul, and from there it goes to tyre manufacturers in São Paulo. However, there are serious problems facing the rubber-tappers' project. With world prices falling high dependence on rubber is not advisable. Unfortunately, the region lacks Brazil nuts which elsewhere provide the most profitable additional source of 'sustainable' income for rubber tappers. Furthermore, rubber plantations have been developed in southern Brazil and this may destroy the market for forest rubber within the next five years.

The estate owners who have remained in the reserve are another potential source of trouble. Many are involved in destructive activities such as logging and drug-trafficking.

Meanwhile the extreme remoteness of the area means that transport costs are high and education, health care and the affairs of the Co-operative Association are difficult and costly to organize.

But it does not seem to stop them doing so – or dampen the tappers' commitment to their project.

Source: National Council of Rubber Tappers, Cruzeiro do Sul, and Alex Shankland; Mary Helena Allegretti, 'Extractive Reserves' in Anthony B Anderson, *Alternatives to Deforestation*, Colombia University Press 1990



came from Ceará, a state in the North East of Brazil. 'Relatives told me there was a good life to be had here. People from the North East are always adventurous, always on the look-out for a decent break. I thought I'd be better off here, but I'd probably have been better off if I'd stayed put. I had none of the skills you need to survive here.'

Within two months he'd contracted malaria and was sick for the next two years. It would be another 15 years before he'd leave the forest again, by now married and with a family of 11 children. He had one inestimable advantage: he'd learned to read and write. 'Well, as they say, in the land of the blind the one-eyed man is king', he says.

He managed to make a good living by working as a storekeeper. But then as old age approached he felt the urge to return to his roots on the Tejo. He took a course in health care.

'I have no words to express the gratitude I feel towards these people for the welcome they've given me. But I can't help but feel sad, seeing the terrible state into which they have fallen. That's why we've got to battle on to make the alternatives work. While there's a chance I'm not

going to give up.'

That night we sling our hammocks in the open-sided shed that is used for meetings. Candles are placed around it and beyond them the forest shines bright with fireflies beneath a brilliant star-lit sky. Swinging gently in my hammock, gazing out through the dappled veil of my mosquito net, I watch a magical scene.

The rubber tappers gather around the last remaining candle, the sharp contours of their faces drawn by hardship and determination, sculpted from the darkness by the candlelight. They embrace and encourage each other in their struggle to defend the forest and for their own survival. They sing songs to each other.

I think: what courageous people these are; how terrible the odds they face; how pitiful their resources; how meagre their demands. I know with absolute certainty that their fate and that of the forest they inhabit are bound inextricably together. My doubts about their motives seem mean, small-minded. Of course they care about the forest. They live with it and from it. It is their blood that has been shed as the forest falls. □



# NATURAL MAGIC

The soil of the Amazon rainforest is almost totally sterile. The forest only flourishes because it has devised a survival system of its own.

This is how it works.



## WATER CYCLE

1. Rain falls in the forest.
2. The forest absorbs half the water...and sweats it back into the atmosphere.
3. The other half runs off into the rivers and down to the Atlantic Ocean where clouds form and return to the forest.

## NUTRIENTS CYCLE

1. Shallow roots collect nutrients from water and forest litter.
2. Creepers and orchids take nutrients from rain and trap growth-inducing nitrogen on their leaves.
3. Special natural chemicals help leaves cope with difficult conditions and prolong life. Leaves fall as litter to the forest floor.

## LIFE CYCLE

1. Forest giants die and fall, clearing the forest around them for new plants.
2. Fast-growing, light-loving plants grow first.
3. Animals arrive and excrete seeds new to the area.
4. Longer living trees and future giants dominate again.





Photo: Alex Shankland

Warning signals behind the Kampa silence: their patience is wearing thin and they still recall how Juan Santos Atahualpa drove out all invaders.

## The devil's design

Can white 'devils' help the people of the rainforest? Alex Shankland investigates.

**S**UDDENLY, as we rounded the corner, there they were. The curtain of rain that separated us reduced them to silhouettes at the top of the riverbank, but the robes, the crown-like hats, the proud bearing – these were unmistakable.

My first sight of the Kampa Indians, almost a year ago, was probably much the same as the vision that greeted the rubber tappers who first pushed up the River Amônia a century ago. Such early encounters often ended abruptly with a volley of arrows and the Kampa disappearing back into the forest. Now, on my second visit a year later, they wait impassively for us to land and explain our business.

The Kampas' word for non-indigenous people, *virakocha*, also means 'devil'. It's not hard to see why. Their control of vast areas of the Peruvian Amazon was once guaranteed by close contacts with the Inca Empire. From the sixteenth century onwards it was undermined by successive waves of *conquistadores*, missionaries and settlers. Semi-nomadic Kampa communities were herded into mission compounds, children were taken for 'civilizing' and never came back, villages were sacked and women carried off. Resisting where they could, but always moving on when conflicts became too intense, the Kampa gave up huge tracts of their traditional territory.

Then, in 1742, the appearance of a would-be Messiah calling himself Juan

Santos Atahualpa and claiming to be the reborn Inca Sun King ignited the smouldering Kampa resistance. In a devastating guerrilla campaign they swept the invaders from their ancestral forests. Their territory remained closed to the *virakocha* for almost 150 years.

This hard-won respite for the Kampa was over by the end of the nineteenth century when the Rubber Boom flooded the forests with outsiders once again. But though they were pushed to the margins of their territory for a second time, the legacy of conflict and the hope of deliverance lived on among them.

In Kampa mythology the god Inca is the creator of all technology. He has been captured by the whites, giving them dominion over the machines that are the source of their power. One day, however, he will escape and return to his people, the Kampa (who call themselves *Ashaninca*), and they will finally drive out all invaders.

Echoes of this myth lie behind the constant efforts of the Peruvian guerrilla movement Sendero Luminoso to recruit the Kampa to their cause, promising a return to the glorious past of the Inca Empire. The same echoes were present too in a warning uttered by the tribal elder Pedrillo at a meeting of the River Amônia community called to discuss the continued invasion of their reserve by loggers and settlers: 'We *Ashaninca* are a patient people, but the time is coming when we

will just have to sort out these invaders once and for all'.

The River Amônia reserve is a triangle of territory where some 400 Kampa live, separated from 40,000 others who live in Peru by a border that means nothing to them but everything to the non-indigenous people – drug-runners, settlers and the military. It is an enclave where *hevea brasiliensis*, the rubber tree, is not found. This quirk of nature turned it into a refuge a century ago – now, another quirk of nature is threatening to destroy it.

The area contains some of Amazonia's richest collections of prized hardwood trees like cedar and mahogany. White settlers living on both sides of the border are hired by timber bosses to fell trees in the reserve and float them down the River Amônia. Toxic compounds in the sap of the cedar logs contaminate the water, which the Kampa use for drinking and bathing.

The logging activity also serves as a cover for drug-running. This is now a major source of wealth for local politicians and landowners – the direct descendants of the rubber barons. Last year the Federal Police were sent up the Amônia in search of drugs. They headed straight for the Kampa's gardens. They pulled up the four or five coca bushes grown there for medicinal use – a tradition the Kampa owe to their links with Andean civilization. The police returned triumphantly to Rio Branco, the state capital of Acre, to proclaim on television that they had destroyed a 50,000-bush plantation belonging to the Indians. Evidence that settlers had been planting coca inside the reserve was completely ignored. 'To the police, one word from a *virakocha* is worth a hundred of our words', says



Francisco Pianko, administrator of the community's cooperative and eldest son of chief Antonio Pianko.

The casual racism with which the Kampa are treated by most non-indigenous people shows a dangerous ignorance of history and a failure to read the warning signals in the Kampa's silence. Francisco's brother, Moisés, says that when the explosion comes it will claim 'not one but many' lives.

On my first visit here I came as a journalist seeking the story of a proud people caught in the cross-fire of drug barons, the military, guerrilla movements, landless migrants, unscrupulous loggers – the elements of the perverse greed-and-power complex that Western civilization has unleashed on the Amazon.

This time I am returning with an offer of collaboration, a project to export their beautiful handicrafts to rich northern countries, cutting out the intermediaries, guaranteeing that the Kampa will receive the full market value for their art.

But the path to communication between cultures has to be trodden carefully. I am now not an observer but a participant and although the Kampa recognize me as a friend I have not forgotten the tension that seemed to underlie that first moment of contact. The reality is that the Kampa's friends as well as their enemies can be responsible for the disruption of their traditional structures.

The additional presence on this trip of Forest People's Alliance leader Macedo, visiting the community in the name both of his long friendship with them and of the political necessity of good relations between them and their rubber tapper neighbours in the Extractive Reserve, gives me further food for thought.

Macedo and his friend Terri Vale de Aquino, a pioneering anthropologist, have a legendary reputation among the Indians of Acre. They owe it principally to their efforts to free indigenous communities from exploitation through the founding of co-operatives. Most observers agree that

this movement has been very important in helping the Indians of Acre to organize and fight for self-determination.

Not so long ago, Francisco Pianko tells me, some Kampa felled 12 majestic, century-old mahogany trees to pay for just one shotgun and ammunition – now a necessity because over-hunting by white settlers has reduced the availability of game beyond the point where a bow and arrow can produce a full stomach. The Kampa became exploited labourers for the loggers who had invaded their land. Logging became their main means of access to industrialized goods.

The idea behind the co-op, originally funded by the Gaia Foundation, is not just to bring material benefits but to put an end to the system which forces the Kampa to collaborate with invaders in destroying their own forest.

I've heard it said, however, that the only thing wrong with Macedo and Terri's co-ops is that they don't work. Looking at the Kampa's difficulties with the co-op I begin to see what this might mean.

In the absence of rubber the Kampa lacked any saleable product to exchange for industrialized goods. The only answer seemed to be agriculture. However, the Kampa traditionally grow their produce in small gardens tended by each family to supply their immediate needs. The idea of communal plots generating surplus produce has little meaning for them.

Nevertheless, Francisco Pianko went ahead and installed the co-operative's own fields where beans, rice and sugar cane are now grown. A couple of dozen hectares of 'secondary growth' – previously cleared and now overgrown – forest were cleared to make way for the fields. The Kampa who now work them in exchange for goods from the co-operative store have come to regard the communal plot as belonging to Francisco Pianko, since he controls the payment they receive. Far from being their representative he has become their boss.

Matters are now coming to a head. Francisco Pianko has used a grant from the Brazilian Development Bank arranged by Macedo to buy a rice-husking machine in the hope of improving on the low prices received for unhusked rice. Splendidly incongruous under the thatched roof of the cooperative hut, the husker has become an object of suspicion and incomprehension. 'We can't eat a machine', run the muttered complaints.

Summoned to help Francisco Pianko reply to such criticism at a meeting, Macedo defends the machine's potential for giving the Kampa a better return for their work. But later he admits to me that its purchase has been a step in the wrong direction. 'The worst of it is that the Kampa don't even eat rice – they're growing white people's food to exchange for white people's goods', he says.

But he does not yet have any alternative to offer the Kampa. Handicrafts fetch



Monument in mahogany: mutilated giants lie like memorials to the lost life of the forest.

Photo : Mark Edwards/Still Pictures





Francisco Pianko: feathered friendly advice.

such derisory prices locally that, despite the Kampa's enthusiasm, they can only come to the co-op's rescue if a direct channel to the international market can be opened up. All the evidence seems to be there to justify the critics' claim that the co-operative is doomed to failure: power concentrated in the hands of a single family, no perception of the project as truly communal and no relationship between the Kampa's traditions and what the co-op has ended up producing to maintain its economic viability.

My unease is most intense during the *kamerambi* session jointly presided over by Macedo and the Kampa shaman Pedrinho. As the drink – brewed from the sacred hallucinogenic *ayahuasca* vine – takes effect and we each begin our inner journey, strong bonds of shared experience seem to link us all. We murmur 'beautiful, beautiful' as the Kampa sing their ancient invocatory songs. They respond with 'kameta, txai' – 'that's great, my brother' – to Macedo's guitar-accompanied hymns to the Queen of the Forest.

But, increasingly, Macedo seems to be taking control, steering the ceremony away from the simplicity with which the Kampa approach their *ayahuasca* visions and towards the semi-Christianized ceremonial of the *Daime* cult to which ecologically-minded urban Brazilian intellectuals are flocking. My own visions seem to show the proud Kampa paralyzed in the face of the individualistic energy represented by Macedo. He in turn seems to be questing after spiritual integration with the forest in an aggressive, almost predatory way, as if trying to bend it to his will. I begin to wonder if he is truly the ecological visionary, the jungle sage I have always taken him for.

Before condemning Macedo's imposition of an inappropriate system, however, I pause to think again about how the co-op was created. When it began, the Kampa were not an uncontacted tribe living in undisturbed harmony with the forest. They had been pushed into their enclave by successive invasions. Here they were forced to deplete the forest on which they depended both materially and spiritually – forced, that is, by their need for the white people's goods which contact had created long ago. They were fragmented and exploited. Despite the pride which enabled them to hold onto their traditions,

their culture was being eroded.

For all its defects, the co-operative has broken their dependence on the loggers. It is a focus around which they can organize to rid themselves of the invaders. Their enthusiasm for working with handicrafts provides hope that a combination of outside support with the flexibility to adapt the co-operative to the Kampa's cultural realities could turn it into a genuinely viable option for the future.

Above all, in Macedo and the Forest People's Alliance they have a channel to negotiate, in dignity as a separate culture, with the society which dominates the world around them. Within a few days of our visit Macedo secured a space on the local TV news for Antonio Pianko and his sons to denounce the continued invasion of the reserve, and has set about raising funds to take them to Brasilia to press the Federal Government into action to avert bloodshed.

My own *ayahuasca* vision ends with a symbolic reconciliation between the force of individual will that the West has brought to Amazonia and the instinctive sense of a community – extending beyond humanity to include all living things – that is the essence of indigenous wisdom. The

Forest People's Alliance represents the struggle of people like Macedo to find a middle way between the cultures, given the impossibility of returning forest peoples like the Kampa to a state of complete isolation – even supposing that this is what they actually want.

We need the Kampa and other indigenous cultures to restore the balance to our world view. They need our individualistic energy to force open a space for their own survival in the world we are creating. We should not deny our own roots, pretending we are not *virakocha*, any more than we should tolerate the genocidal stupidity of policies that seek the enforced 'integration' of indigenous peoples.

Now the images that fill my memory are mostly happy ones: but the ambiguity of my feelings remains. The cross-cultural struggle for an alliance to save the forest is full of contradictions, paradoxes and blind alleys – but, if we are prepared to learn as we go along rather than impose simplistic solutions, it can be won. □

Alex Shankland, a freelance journalist based in São Paulo, is also active in environmental and development projects in western Amazonia.

## PEOPLE

### A place for humans

People have been a part of the forest for thousands of years – though, like the forest itself, they have gone through many changes.

Estimates of the total population of the Amazon Basin vary between 20 and 25 million. Of these, two thirds live in cities and towns. The largest Amazonian city, Manaus, has a population of about two million, including industrial workers in large electronics factories set up by multinational companies with government subsidies.

Between 750,000 and 800,000 indigenous peoples still live in the Amazon – a decline from around four million in 1900 and perhaps as many as 15 to 20 million in 1500. Of the 500 indigenous nations in Latin America, about 180 live in or around the rainforest.

*Caboclo* (literally 'copper-coloured') is the term sometimes used to describe people of mixed Indian and white blood – there are, however, no clear racial distinctions between them and people known as *branco*, or white.

Most Amazon peoples, other than the indigenous nations, are distinguished by their activity rather than their race or nationality and many switch regularly from one activity to another.

*Ribeirinhos* are people who live by the river and make their living from it, or from petty extraction from the forest and its land.

There are about 70,000 *seringueiros*, or

rubber tappers, still working in the forest. With their families they total around 400,000 people. They or their ancestors usually migrated from the North East of Brazil.

*Garimpeiros* are 'placer' miners or panners, people who extract ores from superficial deposits using simple techniques. They may do some preliminary refining as well. The numbers involved vary enormously from perhaps 300,000 to as many as one million. It is dangerous and unhealthy work:

few *garimpeiros* use this as their main form of income for more than 10 years.

The most recent arrivals in the Amazon are landless colonizers. The majority of these have arrived during the past 15 years in the states of Mato Grosso, Rondônia and Acre to the West, and Pará, Goiás and Maranhão to the East. The population of Rondônia grew at an average 28 per cent per year during the 1980s – or more than ten times the national average. The

town of Imperatriz in western Amazonia has grown from about 75,000 people in 1980 to more than 400,000 today.

But with a population density still probably less than one person per square kilometre, and not substantially greater than it was at the time of discovery by Europeans, any argument that the forest is being destroyed by sheer weight of human numbers has little solid foundation.

Sources: ed. Anthony B Anderson, *Alternatives to Deforestation*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1990; S Hecht and A Cockburn, *The Fate of the Forest*, Verso, London, 1989; *The Amerindians of South America*, Minority Rights Group Report No. 15, London, 1987.





# Hell hath no hammock

An editor in distress is like a skipper with no spanner.

**R**UBBER smells. I'd say it smells of ancient cheese and sewers, but my companions insist it is the odour of unwashed human sex organs. There's about a ton of it, lying in enormous balls (I'm sorry to say), right across the floor of the boat which is within an inch or two of sinking. The rubber is the same stuff I saw being sold at the tappers co-op and we're taking it for sale to the processing factory in Cruzeiro do Sul.

This boat belongs to the Union of Indigenous Nations (UNI) – and while the *Chico Mendes* carried no rubber tappers, this one carries rubber tappers but no Indians. As well as the rubber there's a family with four children (a fifth on the way) and two grandmothers camped in the

bows. In the stern are the skipper, two sisters and sometimes a new-born baby. In between are four elderly tappers keeping their rubber company, a young deaf man with whom I feel an intimate bond, and myself.

As long as we keep moving the stench of the rubber is not intolerable, and it gives added point to the journey. I do a quick calculation in my head. The co-op buys the rubber from the tappers at \$0.5 a kilo. That means our cargo is worth about \$500. The co-op produces about 500 tons of rubber a year, and there are some 500 families in the co-op. That means an average income of \$500 per family per year – not enough to live off. On top of that, the goods they buy from the co-op have to be

marked up by at least a third on town prices to cover transport costs. No wonder they are hungry and sick.

By the morning of the next day I am getting just a taste of what it feels like. The record in my diary reads as follows:

'Reasons to be fed up:

1. Camera jammed following jungle jaunts. Is it taking pictures or not?
2. Cracked a rib; despite Marinilza's expert attention yesterday, searing pain if I try to move while breathing in.
3. This I can't avoid doing while clambering over rubber – straighten up, bounce, strike balding pate on roof repeatedly. Redundant instruction book for camera placed inside hat for protection.
4. No tobacco – and no sympathy likely for this either. Large granny, only fellow pipe-smoker met so far, has just enough for herself wound round curious bent sticks on which it is sold here. Damn. This is where the stuff came from in the first place – wonder if there's any growing out there in the forest somewhere?
5. Heat, sweat, dirt, bites, hunger, headaches.
6. No hammock, left on *Chico Mendes*.'

The worst of these is the lack of a hammock. It's hard to describe how utterly lost one feels without a hammock on the Amazon; nowhere to sleep, read, write or just rest and nowhere to 'belong'. What is more we don't travel through the night. We stop off at a rubber tapper's house.

It is perched at the top of the bank, looking like an old garage on stilts, lit inside by oil lamps. There is no furniture. We sit around on the cork-like floor, some 16 of us, silently eating another meal of rice and warm tinned sardines. The smell and grunts of domestic animals (I hope) beneath us rise up through the floorboards.

Everyone repairs to their hammocks, slung like the cocoons of insects from the rafters, a testament to the strength of the house. In the lamplight their bodies seem somehow stronger, smoother, more graceful as they prepare for sleep. The children are rocked vigorously in their mini-hammocks and go to sleep immediately.

If, that is, they have a hammock. And I don't. João, the strikingly good-looking father of the large family, gives me his. But what will he do? He'll be all right. He'll sleep in his wife's hammock. But she, hugely pregnant, doesn't want to sleep with him. She gets out and stomps around, complaining bitterly about the *gringo* who's stolen her hammock. I swing in it feeling like a complete bastard, gazing up at the pelt of what looks horribly like a freshly-killed jaguar hanging from the rafters. The daughter of the house, displaced from her room, tunes into the local radio station which sends out messages and requests for Brazilian pop favourites across the jungles of Acre.

Next day things get worse. We leave



Bliss is hammock-shaped: Amazonian children rarely cry, though they are often hungry and ill.



one of our two motors with a new boat that's being launched for Macedo, and shortly after we've done so the other motor stops. The skipper (whose name I can't catch – he can't spell it either) repairs to his hammock with the two sisters who both seem to be his girlfriends. He doesn't have a *chave*, a spanner.

Now, a skipper with no *chave* on the Amazon is like, well, a gringo with no hammock. We drift helplessly in the dancing current. Alarm spreads through the boat. João takes charge. I'm not sure quite what danger we might be in, but the chances of reaching Cruzeiro in time to catch my plane seem as remote as we are. One passing boat ignores entirely our plaintive cries of '*Chave! Chave!*' and I write in my diary that the Amazon is full of bastards like me.

I repair to the perch I've found for myself on the roof, sitting on a wooden crate, resting my diary on a gas stove. A cock crows from inside another crate behind me, the sound bouncing off the hard forest with a clear echo. And, in the silence, the forest comes alive. Suddenly there are flocks of parrots flapping across the river, chattering away to each other – a pair of *coã*, elegant grey heron-like birds with breasts of white and brilliant yellow, settle on the trunk of a fallen tree.

There is a puffing sound to one side. I turn sharply but see just ripples on the surface of the water. A few seconds later a small grey *bôto*, the Amazon river dolphin, slips its back into the air, blows through its breathing hole and disappears into the muddy water again. Then, on the other side of the boat, another one, a third and a fourth, a fifth – this one pink.

The dolphins of the Amazon are rarely caught, except sometimes by shamans for their eyes, which have magical properties. They are, as it were, sacred. Pink dolphins are held responsible for unexplained pregnancies among the women of the forest and therefore, perhaps, are too useful to kill. They gather around the curious spectacle of a silent river boat, puffing, blowing and making a belching noise I take for a laugh.

And so we drift helplessly along for several hours, accompanied by the dolphins, until a Good Samaritan paddles out to us from the bank with a spanner. The motor is repaired in seconds. My feeling of gratitude to him is modified a bit when he returns to pick up a chain saw to saw away at the huge trunk of a hardwood tree lying like a beached whale on the bank.

I have a slightly more tutored eye now. What I had once taken for 'virgin' forest is often no such thing – the hardwoods have been removed, the canopy of the forest broken, the understorey cut back at regular intervals by ragged trails through which the hardwood has been torn out. Moisés told me that once the Juruá was lined with mahogany trees. I am never to see a single one. As if to reinforce the point, we overtake a larger boat towing

## RESOURCES

### The new El Dorado

The search for the City of Gold (*El Dorado*) has haunted the history of the Amazon – but so far has never been rewarded. Today, however, the Amazon is the focus of intense exploration for mineral resources.

There has been a 'gold rush' in Brazilian Amazonia since the discovery of significant deposits at Serra Pelada in 1980. Up to 40,000 *garimpeiros* (gold panners) were working there in a huge open pit by 1983. Activity declined at Serra Pelada in the late 1980s, but increased in Roraima on Yanomami Indian land to the north. At one stage 40,000 *garimpeiros* were working in the vicinity of Surucucus.

Gold mining has created a major environmental catastrophe. An estimated 1,000 tons of mercury used to amalgamate the gold has entered the Amazon river system, with unknown long-term consequences for human and animal health.

Larger multinational companies, like the South African Anglo-American Corporation, are now moving in to force out the panners and begin large-scale operations. Total gold production in Brazil was about 100 metric tons in 1990, of which two thirds was undeclared and smuggled over the border with Uruguay in the south.

Oil has also been discovered in the Amazon. In Ecuador 6,300 square kilometres of Amazon rainforest are within

petroleum claims already being exploited and a further 30,000 square kilometres are being prospected. The companies involved include Texaco, Petro-Canada, Occidental, Arco, Conoco, British Gas and British Petroleum. In 1988, oil accounted for 44 per cent of Ecuador's exports and 40.3 per cent of the Government's income. A much-heralded 'environment friendly' nine-kilometre road built by Petro-Canada, which was designed to preserve forest 'canopy' over it, failed.

Brazilian aluminium production, meanwhile, has increased from less than 300,000 metric tons in 1981 to more than 900,000 tons in 1990. Most of the major world producers are involved, including Alcoa and Alcan; there are 10 bauxite or alumina mines in the Amazon and seven smelters using hydro-electric power from dams.

In Rondônia, 20,000 *garimpeiros* are used by 64 small mining companies to produce tin at the Bom Futuro mine; envi-

ronmental damage from the tailings has reached alarming proportions.

But the damage caused by the rush to extract resources is felt most keenly by the indigenous people of Brazil. Throughout the country there are 77 mining claims – covering an area of 520,000 square kilometres – in indigenous people's land. Most of this is in the Amazon.

Sources: Judith Kimerling, *Natural Resources Defense Council, Quito*; *Minewatch, London*; *Mining Journal*, 23 March 1990; *Mining Annual Review 1990*; CEDI, *Empresas de Mineração e Terras Indígenas na Amazônia*, São Paulo 1987.



behind it a train, at least 100 metres long, of hardwood logs.

João joins me on the roof and, watched by Expedito, who is deaf, he sings plaintive rubber tapper songs for me to record. As I talk to him in faltering Portuguese, he unfolds another tragedy. For the case of pots and pans on which I am sitting, the gas stove where I rest my diary to write, the cock in the crate behind us, are his family's worldly possessions.

João – who talks of his love for the forest – and his family are leaving. There is, he says, no future for them in the forest, no education for his children, no health care for his family, little prospect of anything but a violent, relentless, intensifying struggle for survival. Macedo's only fear is being realized. I think: if João is leaving, who can remain? And for what? To join the 'gold rush' as a small-time miner, destroying the forest and polluting its rivers with the mercury used to extract gold?

We arrive in Cruzeiro in a storm. The great river, which rises and falls in response to climatic events in the distant Andes where deforestation and erosion are growing apace, has flooded some of the poorer houses by its banks. The skipper, who has finally emerged to show his

face as we arrive, delivers his girlfriends into the care of a nun – and promptly runs the boat aground. We are in danger of sinking as we struggle to free ourselves. The wind catches the hat I misguidedly gave him at the start of our journey and it floats off down the river towards Manaus. He insists on carrying my bags through the downpour to the Plinio Hotel.

There, switching on the air conditioning, diving triumphantly under a hot shower, opening a can of Coca Cola from the 'frigobar', I lie on a bed at last and reflect on what I have left behind. Can it really be that this great forest – the largest living thing on earth – now depends for its survival upon some of the most disregarded people it is possible to imagine? Is this what all the international concern, the solemn pronouncements, the glossy reports, the conferences and the campaigns have so far amounted to?

Well, perhaps there's no harm in that. Not if we come to realize that there is, finally, some link between the exploitation of nature and the exploitation of people. It's not, as I have sometimes thought, a question of one or the other. Or perhaps I'd not thought it through properly at all.



## The facts of life ...

### THE RIVER <sup>1</sup>

- is the largest river system in the world: four times larger than the Zaire (the second largest), eleven times larger than the Mississippi.
- discharges 198,000 cubic metres of water per second – enough to fill Lake Ontario in three hours.
- contains one fifth of the world's fresh water – or two-thirds excluding water locked in polar ice caps.
- flows a distance of 6,762 kilometres from its

source in the Peruvian Andes to its mouth – equal to the distance between London and New Delhi.

- has 10,000 tributaries totalling 80,000 kilometres in length which would stretch twice round the Equator.

- provides 24,000 kilometres of navigable 'trunk' waterway – ocean-going ships can penetrate up the Amazon a distance equivalent to crossing the North Atlantic.



### THE FOREST <sup>2</sup>

- extends over five million square kilometres – that is 10 times the size of France.
- makes up one third of the world's remaining tropical rainforest.
- has 30 per cent of all known plant and animal species.
- contains 80,000 known, and at least 10,000 unknown species of tree.
- has a density of between 100 and 300 tree species per hectare of forest (temperate forests have between five and ten).

### THE ANIMALS <sup>2</sup>

In the Amazon there are:

- one fifth of the world's bird species in scarcely one fiftieth of its land surface.
- several million animal species, mostly insects: one tree stump in Bolivia was found to house more ant species than the whole of the UK.
- 3,000 known species of land vertebrates.
- 2,000 known species of fresh water fish, or ten times as many as in the whole of Europe.



### THE ENVIRONMENT <sup>3</sup>

The Amazon Basin (the area drained by the river)

- covers some 7.5 million square kilometres – an area almost as big as Australia – in six different countries (Brazil, Bolivia, Peru, Ecuador, Colombia, Venezuela).
- is the wettest region on earth, with an average rainfall of 2.54 metres per year.
- contains the largest flood-plain forest in the world, covering two per cent of the forest area.
- is surrounded by one of the youngest rock formations on earth (the Andes Mountains) to the west and two of the oldest (the Guyana and Brazilian Shields) to the north and south.
- has very poor soil: 90 per cent suffers from phosphorous deficiency, 50 per cent from low potassium reserves and 24 per cent from low drainage or flood hazards.

The Amazon rainforest is a living thing. It lives in balance – or 'equilibrium' – consuming what it produces. If the balance is lost it may die.

## The facts of death

### DEFORESTATION

- As much as 75 per cent of deforestation in the Amazon has resulted directly or indirectly from large-scale agricultural or industrial schemes. Many of them have received funding from international agencies like the World Bank.<sup>4</sup>

LANDSAT Surveys: Deforestation <sup>5</sup>

Area of forest cleared as a percentage of State or territory

|             | 1975 | 1985 |
|-------------|------|------|
| Amapá       | 0.1  | 0.4  |
| Pará        | 0.7  | 9.6  |
| Roraima     | 0.0  | 1.4  |
| Maranhão    | 1.1  | 19.7 |
| Tocantins   | 1.2  | 11.6 |
| Acre        | 0.8  | 12.8 |
| Rorônia     | 0.3  | 12.8 |
| Mato Grosso | 1.1  | 23.6 |
| Amazonas    | 0.1  | 6.8  |
| Total       | 0.6  | 12.0 |

- Estimates of the total amount of forest now cleared vary between five per cent and 20 per cent. Most independent experts now accept a figure of 12 per cent by 1985, of which 75 per cent has taken place since 1960.



- In 1974 a single fire set by Volkswagen destroyed 10,000 square kilometres of forest: the largest fire ever known.<sup>1</sup>

- In 1987, probably the worst year for deforestation so far, satellites detected 8,000 fires in the states of Rondônia and Mato Grosso between June and September. In that year, an area of 210,000 square kilometres, almost as big as the UK, was cleared.<sup>1</sup>

### FLOODING BY DAMS <sup>6</sup>

- Brazil's '2010 Plan' envisages the construction of 31 hydroelectric dams in the Amazon Basin.
- Two dams have already been completed: Tucuruí in Pará and Balbina near Manaus have flooded a total of some 5,000 square kilometres of rainforest.
- Much of the energy produced by Tucuruí is consumed by aluminium

smelters. The construction of the Balbina Dam cost \$700 million, and a further \$700 million may be needed to increase its efficiency.

● The Waimiri-Atroari Indians living in the neighbourhood of the Balbina Dam have been decimated both by the dam and by the BR 174 Highway running north: in 1972 they numbered 3,000, but by the mid-1980s their numbers had been reduced to less than 300.

### HIGHWAYS TO HELL <sup>3</sup>

- The *Calha Norte* ('Northern Trench') project was begun by the military in 1985 to develop the region's network of roads, increase the military presence in the area and improve the demarcation of national boundaries.
- It covers 24 per cent of Brazilian Amazonia in a 6,000-kilometre long corridor which includes 84 indigenous areas, 51 different Indian peoples, and 557 mining claims.
- It includes the construction of the *perimetral norte* highway through the forest and the development of a hydroelectric plant at São Paradão.
- Official policy is to promote the colonization of Indian peoples, converting them to the life of agricultural peasants on one-square-kilometre size plots.

<sup>1</sup> Angela Gennino, ed. *Amazonia: voices from the rainforest. A Resource & Action Guide*, Rainforest Action Network and Amazonia Film Project, San Francisco, 1990.  
<sup>2</sup> Rainforests: Land use options for Amazonia, Oxford University Press and World Wildlife Fund UK, in association with Survival International, Oxford, 1990, introduction by Norman Myers. <sup>3</sup> S Hecht and A Cockburn, *The Fate of the Forest*, Verso, London, 1989. <sup>4</sup> Philip M Fearside, 'Deforestation and International Economic Development Projects in Brazilian Amazonia' in *Conservation Biology*, vol 1, no 3, October 1987. <sup>5</sup> Anthony B Anderson, 'Deforestation in Amazonia' in Anthony B Anderson, ed. *Alternatives to Deforestation*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1990. <sup>6</sup> Barbara J Cummings, *Dam the Rivers, Damn the People*, Earthscan, London, 1990.



# Urban exiles

**Most of the people of the Amazon live in towns and cities. They talk to David Ransom about life, death and dislocation.**

**'P**EOPLE are stupid!' says Lucia, sitting in a café in the great city of Belém – 'Bethlehem' – at the mouth of the Amazon.

She wears a mock leopardskin blouse and her hair is swept back from a heavily made-up face. Beside her sits a woman with elegant spectacles – she reminds me of an aunt of mine in England.

'They don't want to see the benefits that unity can bring us. They are fooled into seeing only the things that divide us. But of course all of us poor people, black, brown, yellow, white, whatever race we belong to, whatever sex we are, all of us have many problems in common.' The woman next to her nods her agreement.

The café is built over an open sewer in the industrial part of Belém. Across the road more women are gathered around a factory gate. It is one of the factories owned by the Mutran family, who control a large part of the city's Brazil nut processing industry. I have been brought here by Igina, a smart young woman who gave up commercial work to join the Movement of Rural and Urban Women.

All the women I talk to tell much the same story. They work long hours for minimal pay in unhealthy conditions. They are paid piece-work rates and receive nothing for damaged Brazil nuts although they are still sold in their crushed form. Pregnant women are sacked, and since many have half a dozen children or more, that adds up to an awful lot of sacking.

Most of the women live across the open sewer in a rambling shantytown that was 'invaded' by workers in the Brazil nut factories 15 years ago. In some ways it is a familiar Latin American urban scene. But what makes this different is that all the workers in the factories are women and the community is largely run by them. They have joined the Food Workers Union and some have become active in the Movement of Urban and Rural Women.

'As you can imagine, there's plenty of *machismo* in the union and plenty of members expect the women just to do what they are told,' says Igina. 'In fact there's just one woman full-time official. But unions in Brazil are only now beginning to recover from the inheritance of the military dictatorship when everyone had to belong to official unions. Their job was



**Cramped margins: a sense of exile pervades the industrial towns and cities of the Amazon.**

to keep their members in line. Now, for the first time, the leaders are beginning to think about the interests of their members. They have even supported strikes by the women in these factories. Radical women are beginning to make an impact, and some of the men don't like that.'

These, too, are the people of the Amazon. They live in the cities and towns where once the forest stood and now the forces invading the Amazon are generated. This is where the people who quit the forest end up – and from where those who invade it frequently set out.

There is a point south of Belém that is known as the 'Parrot's Beak' – because of the shape formed by the boundaries of the states of Pará, Tocantins and Maranhão where they meet. Here the Belém-to-Brasília highway crosses the new 900-kilometre railway running from São Luís on the coast to the giant Carajás iron ore mine. It should be blessed by the benefits of modern, industrial development. Instead it is the scene of the most intense and violent land conflicts in Brazil.

Take a look at Açailândia, perched on hilltops near the actual junction of the highway and railway. On these hilltops, balancing precariously over eroded gorges, thousands of people live in utter squalor. Most of them are rural workers driven from the land by the *fazendeiros* – the ranchers. Without facilities of any kind, they live in minute wooden shacks. The smallest of all are on a patch of land 'donated' by the friend of a local politician who made as many promises as possible in exchange for votes in recent elections. The air is thick with the acrid smoke of burning wood from hundreds of adobe ovens making charcoal.

Such conditions are common throughout the world. I've seen plenty just as bad. But there is something peculiarly sickening about this place. I try to figure out what it is.

Part of it is simply the sight of the great rainforest being destroyed. There are said to be some 600 sawmills in the 300-kilometre stretch between Imperatriz and Paragominas. They export the best hard-





Ailton Krenak hitch-hiked to his roots.

woods to the rich world. Second-class wood is used for the domestic building and furniture trades. The mills are incredibly wasteful, losing as much as 70 per cent of the usable wood.

But the worst part of it is, I think, the way deforestation combines with massive foreign investment to produce utter human misery. One might argue for ever about *why* this should be so. But you have to begin by seeing that it *is* so. And the biggest single complaint I hear from the people actually experiencing it is that no-one wants to know. Talking to the active members of trade union and community groups, who risk their lives for their work, I discover what I think lies at the heart of my growing sense of outrage.

The single measure more likely than anything else to halt the continued deforestation of the Amazon is the equitable distribution and more efficient use of the land already cleared. That means land reform. It also means orchestrated violence and intimidation to prevent it – or any other challenge to the power of the *fazendeiros* and *patrões*.

Our companion, Gil, is a trade unionist who worked on the Belém-Brasília highway. He stops as we drive along it and points to a place where he unearthed the bodies of fellow construction workers buried in a shallow grave. A little further on he shows us where labourers were simply burned to death in the forest instead of being paid. (The first news I receive on returning to England is that Ribeiro de Souza, president of the Rural Workers Union in Rio Maria, just to the south, has been assassinated. He is the twelfth rural workers' leader killed in the Parrot's Beak in just one month.)

The violence is directed precisely against those people who are leading the search for a better future, not just for themselves but for the forest as well. We talk to union leaders from the sawmills in Paragominas, and they are perfectly well aware that their work is destroying their children's future. Most of them are farmers who look for inspiration to the Movement of Landless People and the Union of Rural Workers.

A sense of exile and displacement pervades the towns and cities of the Amazon.

Indeed, it pervades urban Brazil. The greatest migration of all is, in fact, from rural to urban life – to the gigantic industrial conglomeration around São Paulo in Southern Brazil, where now upwards of 40 million people live. And it is here that the Union of Indigenous Nations (UNI) works to strengthen the political influence of Brazil's indigenous peoples – and to develop alternatives to deforestation.

Ailton Krenak is the Union's national leader. His people, the Krenak, were evicted from their traditional lands before he was born. His parents moved to São Paulo. Perhaps it was a sense of displacement that gave him his early insights. 'As a boy I already had a clear vision, but I had no real understanding,' he says. 'I have always had the feeling that the Indian nations are really one people.'

So he set out on a voyage around Brazil to meet them, hitching lifts where he could, travelling with Indian chiefs to meetings. 'It was as if the original streams were meeting to become one river, gathering strength as it flowed. We began to create expectations where before there had been nothing but despair.'

Links have been forged with rubber tappers through the Forest People's Alliance and Ailton is interested in working with rural and industrial unions. 'But we're not interested in just talking. We need to take practical steps, small measures that will provide a positive

example'.

I travel with him to the Centre the Union of Indigenous Nations has set up near Goiânia on what was once forested land just south of Brasília. Representatives of indigenous peoples from right across Amazonia come here to study alternatives to deforestation. Ailton wants them to return to their villages with the knowledge they have gained.

In the evening I go for a walk with Mario Krenak, the caretaker of the Centre. He takes me into a plantation of maize. At its centre is a tiny hut. Inside it are Joveno, Maria and their two small children. They offer us food and coffee. They are landless migrants from southern Brazil who have been taken on by the Centre, though they are plainly not Indian.

We sit in silence, the 'Indian' the 'migrants' and the 'gringo' together, watching the sun set over the valley as the children play with a plastic scooter. What I am finally beginning to realize is that no amount of intimidation can remove entirely from these people their sense of dignity or their courage to resist. The violence they have all endured can also take them beyond their personal suffering, across racial, cultural and geographical divides. That, I feel certain, is how their future, and that of the forest itself, will eventually be secured. □

## PROJECTS

### The Greater Carajás carve up

In 1980 a helicopter developed engine trouble and landed on the Carajás mountains in southern Pará state. It happened to be carrying a surveyor. He found the largest and richest deposits of iron ore in the world.

A huge development project was formulated by the Brazilian Government. It proposed the investment of \$62 billion in an area covering almost 10% of Brazil's territory, most of it within the rainforest. The Greater Carajás Programme (GCP) was born and the Government launched a scheme to improve the 'infrastructure' (roads, power supplies and so on) within the area covered by the Programme.

The iron ore project was implemented between 1982 and 1987 at a total cost of some \$3 billion, largely financed by the World Bank (\$304.5 million), the EC (\$600 million), Japan (\$450 million) and the Brazilian Government. It is run by the largest state-owned mining company, the Companhia Vale do Rio Doce (CVRD). A 900-kilometre railway was constructed between the mine and São Luís on the coast.

The GCP was intended to promote private enterprise. Charcoal-fired pig iron smelters are now being constructed around the mine. They will consume 1,500 square

kilometres of forest every year. Plans to reforest with plantations have yet to be realized, partly because the low international market price of pig iron has made this uneconomic. The programme also called for the establishment of ranches for beef cattle in units of 100 square kilometres each.

The idea was that by linking the natural resources of the area to large 'agro-pastoral' industries it would be possible to achieve in less than two decades a level of development

in the region that had taken a century in the US.

The controlling, state-owned mining company takes great pride in its environmental record within the boundaries of the iron ore project. This appears to be true within the company's tastefully landscaped and forested enclave. Outside the wire fences the deforestation set in motion by the project is obvious. Within a 300 kilometre wide strip along the railroad 47% of the forest had been

cleared by the end of 1985 alone.

By 1989 less than 37% of the land occupied by Indians within the Programme area had been properly demarcated in recognition of their land rights.

Sources: Anthony B Anderson, 'Smokestacks in the rainforest: industrial development and deforestation in the Amazon Basin' in *World Development* vol 18 no 9, 1990; Anthony L Hall, *Developing Amazonia: Deforestation and social conflict in Brazil's Carajás programme*, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1989.





Simply...

# THE AMAZON'S HIDDEN HISTORY

The people of the Amazon have left few historical records. This is because most of their artifacts were made from wood and other organic matter which would have rotted or disappeared. But attempts are now being made to reveal the history of the forest and its people.

## 1 CHANGING FOREST



**RECENT SCIENTIFIC DISCOVERIES** show that, far from being 'ageless', the Amazon rainforest has undergone dramatic natural transformations. The most notable were during the Ice-age. At this time the world's tropical regions became cooler and drier. The forest shrank and broke up, the savanna grasslands expanded. The small patches of forest or 'refugia' that remained did not all evolve in the same way, with the same vegetation or animal life. So, when the forest eventually came together again there was great genetic variety within it.

## 2 ARRIVAL OF HUMANS

**HUMANS ARE ONLY** recent arrivals in the forest. They first crossed the frozen Bering Straits into North America about 30,000 years ago – reaching the lowlands and forests of Latin America between 15,000 and 20,000 years ago. People first started farming and settling on the Amazonian floodplains some 5,000 years ago. Few settlements were static: groups would migrate long distances through the forest, little of which was left completely untouched. Conflicts between groups were regular occurrences. The more archeologists discover about the forest the clearer it becomes that estimates of how many people were living in the Amazon before the arrival of Europeans will have to be revised upwards – to perhaps as many as 15 million.



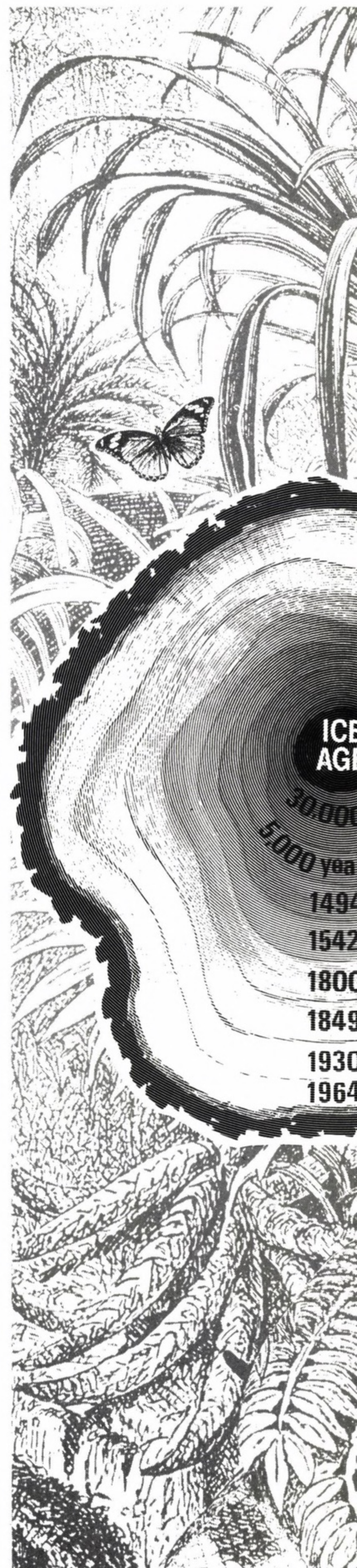
## 3 EUROPEAN 'DISCOVERY'



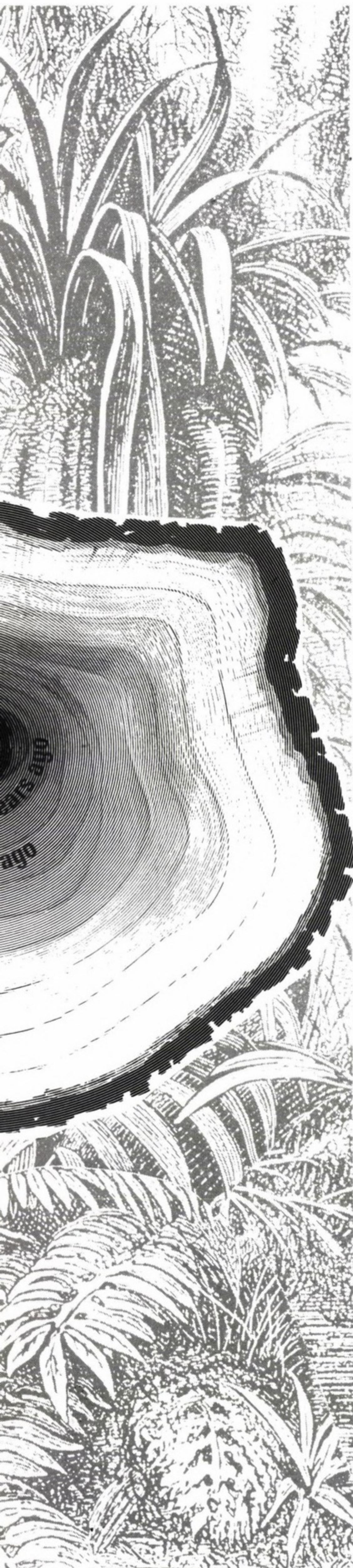
**SOON AFTER COLUMBUS** first set foot on American soil Pope Alexander VI divided the uncharted lands of the 'new world' between Spain on the Pacific coast and Portugal on the Atlantic coast. This happened at the Treaty of Tordesillas in 1494. Quite coincidentally, most of the Amazon Basin fell within the area designated for Portuguese colonization. Initial contacts between Portuguese explorers and the Indians were fairly friendly. They focussed on the extraction of brazilwood – used to produce dye – after which the Portuguese 'colony' was named. The people were, of course, named 'Indians' by Europeans because of their mistaken belief that they had landed in India. Why the river was named the Amazon remains uncertain, but it seems likely that it was because women warriors resembling those in Greek mythology were thought to live there.

## 4 RED GOLD RUSH

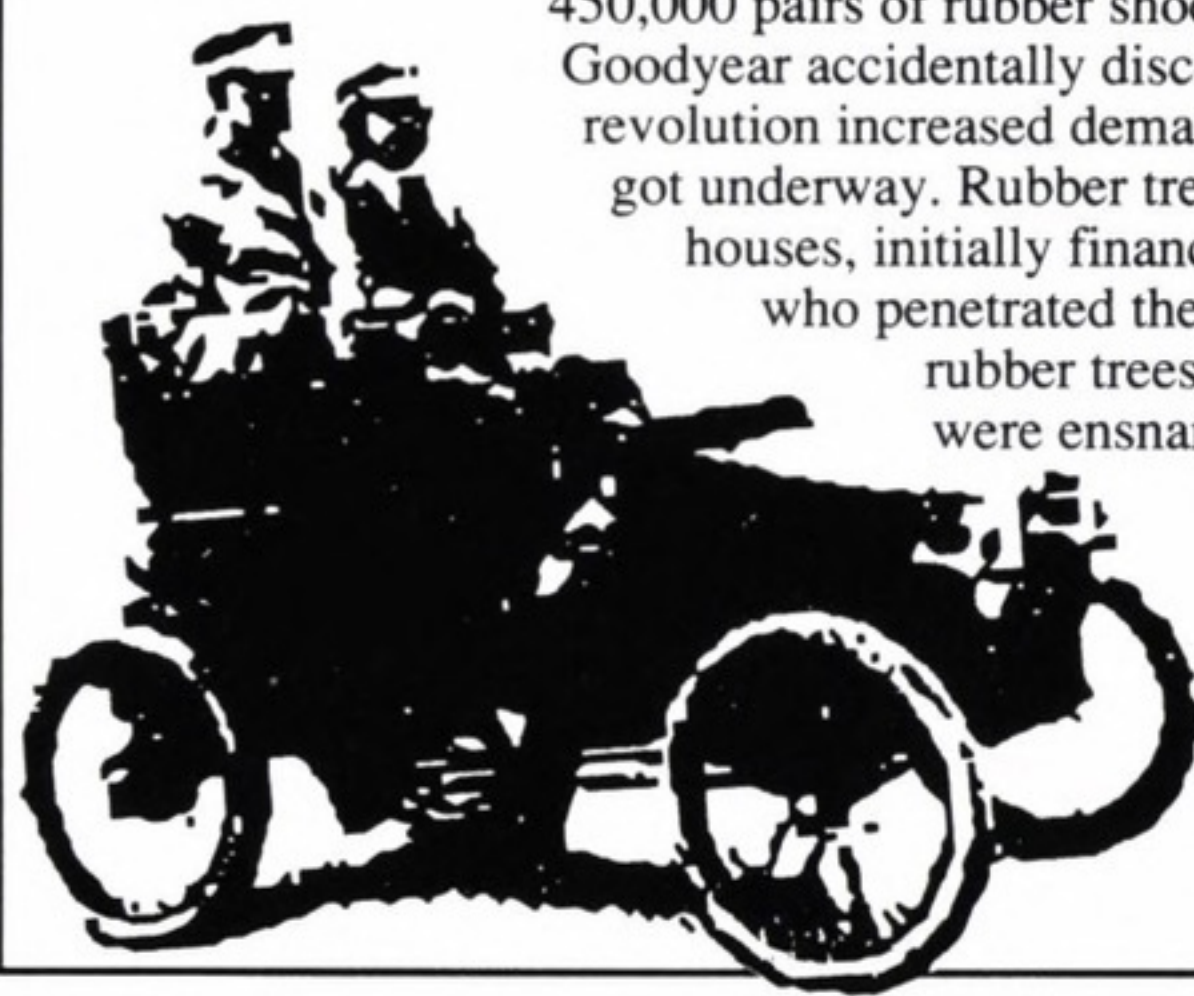
**THE FIRST EUROPEAN** to navigate the Amazon was actually Spanish. Francisco de Orellana travelled downstream from Peru in 1542. For the next 150 years Portuguese interest in the Amazon was largely limited to unsuccessful attempts to recruit Indian labour ('red gold') for sugar plantations on the coast. But the indigenous peoples were not interested in working as wage labourers and violent conflicts ensued. The only Europeans to actually explore the rainforest were Christian missionaries – particularly the Jesuits. But in 1777 the first systematic attempt to develop the region was devised by the Portuguese Marquis of Pombal, mostly out of fear of encroachment by the Spanish, Dutch and British. He created the Companhia Grão Pará e Maranhão in imitation of the British East India Company as a state-backed entity to stimulate and monitor trade in the eastern Amazon region.







## 5 RUBBER BARONS



**A SMALL TRADE** in rubber had already begun during the eighteenth century; by 1800 Belém was exporting 450,000 pairs of rubber shoes to England. But it was only after Charles Goodyear accidentally discovered 'vulcanization' in 1842, and the industrial revolution increased demand for rubber products, that the Brazilian 'boom' got underway. Rubber trees existed nowhere else in the world. Commercial houses, initially financed by the British, extended credit to labourers who penetrated the furthest reaches of the Amazon in search of rubber trees. Once there, the *seringueiros* (rubber tappers) were ensnared in debt bondage to the estate owners, the *seringalistas*, who sold basic necessities to them at grossly inflated prices. The wealth of the trade reverted mostly to Manaus and Belém, and there was no attempt to establish rubber-based industry in the Amazon itself. The trade collapsed during the First World War with the development of rubber plantations in Asia from plants smuggled out of the Amazon.

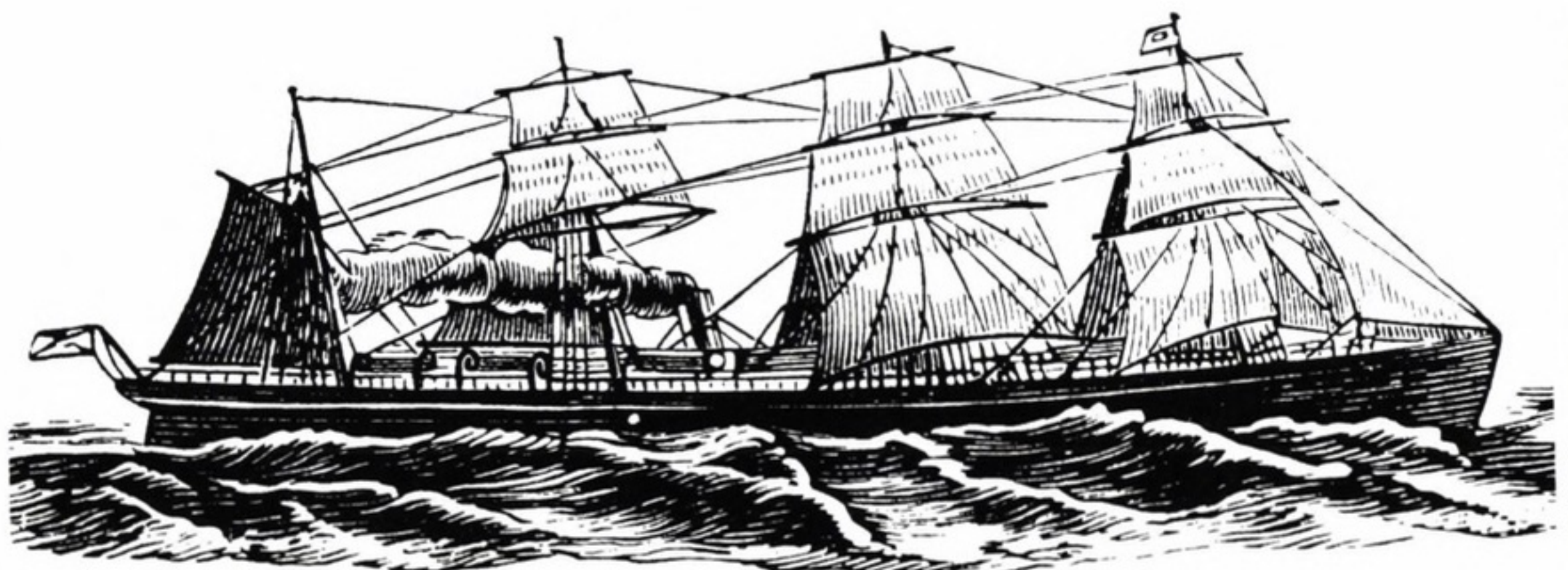
## 6 LAND OF DREAMS



**THE GREAT NATURALISTS** Alexander von Humboldt and Aimé Bonpland travelled to the Amazon in 1799. This was to inspire botanists and explorers throughout the nineteenth century to roam the forest – to the displeasure of the Portuguese prior to Independence in 1821. These explorers returned with fantastic tales. The Amazon became the focus of nineteenth century romantic interest in the notion of the 'natural state' and 'the noble savage'. Mark Twain wrote: 'I was fired with a longing to ascend the Amazon. Also with a longing to open up a trade in coca with all the world. During months I dreamed that dream.'

## 7 EMPIRE OF SCHEMES

**THE US NAVY** conducted the first survey of the navigability of the Amazon in 1849. The first steamboats – which made it easier to ascend the river against the current – began operating in 1853. Growing US interest in the Amazon found one expression in US involvement in the revolution in the rubber-rich region of Acre, which in 1899 declared independence from Bolivia and finally became part of Brazil. The first of many US businessmen to devise grandiose schemes in the Amazon, Percival Farquhar, managed to raise \$70 million in Europe for a variety of projects, including the completion of the Madeira-Mamoré railway in the middle of the jungle. It cost 6,000 lives to construct. Farquhar was ruined by the collapse of the rubber boom.



## 8 MILITARY MANOEUVRES



**SINCE THE 1930s** – and the 'New State' established by the military President Getúlio Vargas – the modern invasion of the Amazon has progressed along largely 'strategic' and 'geopolitical' lines. Particularly since the military coup in 1964, the 'incorporation' of the Amazon into Brazilian territory has been the main motive behind Government policies encouraging the colonization and deforestation of the area. Thus much of the initial deforestation in Rondônia and Pará took place around 'Development Poles' constructed by the Government from 1966 onwards. These were combined with a preference for 'big projects', building roads, dams and other debt-inducing industrial enterprises largely with the backing of multinational lending agencies like the World Bank.

This account is based substantially upon S Hecht and A Cockburn, *The Fate of the Forest*, Verso, London, 1989.



# Invading justice

**Anna Feuchtwang sacrifices her dignity to find out why land seizure can be a good thing.**

**A** COUPLE of lads waded through flood water in front of a Coca-Cola depot just outside Imperatriz. Turning off the main road we bump violently down a track and come to a halt in front of a small lake that lies across our path. It's decision time. Do we strip down to our underwear – or retreat?

We decide to press on. It's getting hot. A group of women wash clothes in the lake. An elderly man appears, wading through waste-high water. He begs us not to take photographs – he's naked. A little embarrassed, I take off my shoes and trousers and plunge into the water, followed by the others.

Gil, our guide, is a trade union veteran who has worked on many of the roads that cut through the Amazon. He's worldly-wise and respected. Now he works for FASE (the Federation of Organizations for

first land invasion in 1987. His wife Eva is a teacher, and she carries what turns out to be our lunch on her head as we walk to a *babassu* palm plantation and sit for a discussion beneath a palm-roofed shelter.

Chomping on juicy watermelon we listen to the history of Assentamento da Criminosa – its name means 'The Place of the Criminal'. This is the first time I've spoken to anyone who is truly optimistic about their future. Eva explains how when the police came with batons and guns to chase them off the land, women and children made a circle around the men in the hope that they would be less likely to be attacked – a brave strategy that paid off. In another incident the squatters blocked the nearby Carajas railway line in support of their claim to the land. Now they have successfully planted rice, maize, beans and manioc.

Most important are their links with other groups of would-be squatters – explaining to them how they succeeded, helping them to plan occupations and joining forces to resist the police after the land has been 'invaded'.

'People are living in Imperatriz with no space around them. I used to live like that, working on the land for a wage with nothing of my own,' says Luis. 'When

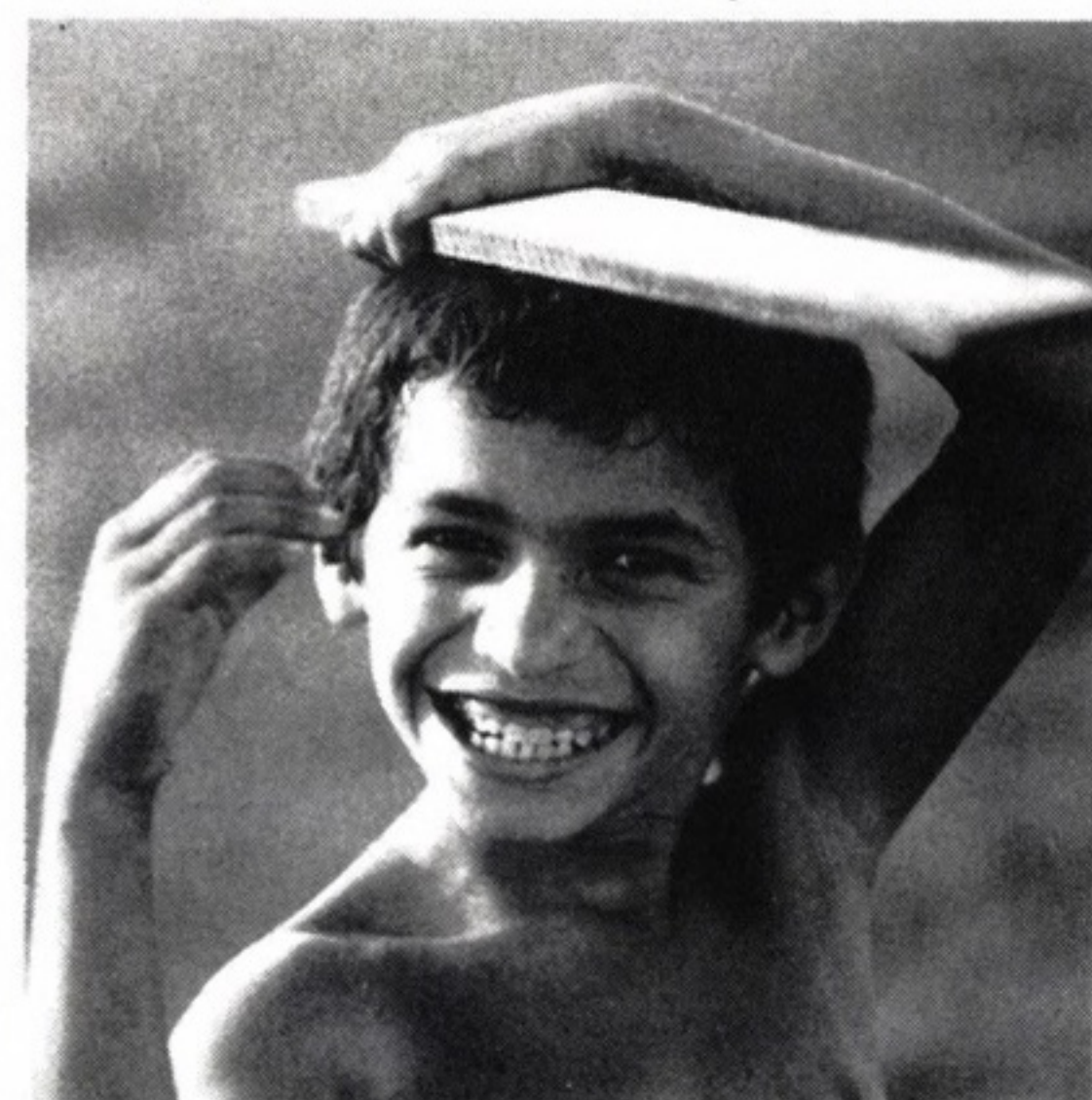
there is so much land in this country it is absurd that people live in such appalling conditions – and they are becoming conscious of that. We have now helped form eight other squatter camps.'

This small-scale return to the land is one answer that the people of Criminosa have found to their desperate poverty. It is also a way of making the land more productive. 'Our aim is to get machines so that we can irrigate the land and build a reservoir for water,' says Luis. 'We want to prove that it is possible to live off this land without harming it.'

We walk back to the village. A large group has gathered in the *danceteria* – or local dance hall. People are sitting or leaning against wooden pillars beneath the palm roof waiting for us.

An old man asks us about the war in the Gulf. It has just broken out. The village has been listening to the news on the BBC World Service. What do we think about it? I say that before I left the UK in early January the majority of people seemed to support the Allies' position. Here there are peace adverts on the TV every night. But there are rumours of a secret deal on nuclear technology between Brazil and Iraq. Moreover the Government's peace-loving credentials sit ill with the fact that since 1980 more than 1,000 rural workers, trade unionists, priests and lawyers campaigning for land rights have been killed. □

**Anna Feuchtwang is a Press Officer with Oxfam UK.**



**Children help to build a better future.** Social and Educational Assistance), an information agency funded by Oxfam.

We're headed for Assentamento da Criminosa, six kilometres away. Here, four years ago, 200 families occupied more than 50 square kilometres of unused land. Since then they have successfully resisted two violent attempts by the police to remove them, though 60 of the families have given up. They are among an estimated 12 million people in Brazil who have either no land or too little to live on.

It's a peaceful walk, despite the raging heat and vicious black flies. Multi-coloured butterflies appear from nowhere and dance around us. Wild orchids dot the thick vegetation. But it's stunted 'secondary' growth on land that was once cleared for cattle, then abandoned.

Finally Assentamento da Criminosa comes into view. The houses are of adobe, roofed with palm. Fruit trees grow between the houses. Pigs and chickens snuffle around. Children peer shyly from dark homes. We're met by Luis, a young community leader who took part in the

## LAND

### Deeds and misdemeanours

Violent death still stalks the rural areas of Brazil, and nowhere more so than in the Amazon. The age-old plea for land reform goes unheeded as more and more land falls into fewer and fewer hands.

Land distribution in Brazil is among the most unequal in the world. Just 4.1 per cent of Brazil's landowners have 81 per cent of the farmland, while 70 per cent of rural households are landless. Of the 18 largest landholdings 15 are in the Amazon, three of them with more than 10,000 square kilometres. About half the territory of the large land-owners is unproductive.

Landlessness has led to migration into the Amazon. Violent land conflicts have become endemic. Between 1985 and 1989 there were 2,973 land conflicts in Brazil, involving 74,258 square kilometres of land, 3.5 million people and 488 assassinations – 346 of them in the Amazon. The majority of killings, like that of Chico Mendes in 1988, are undertaken by *pistoleiros*, gunmen hired by landowners.



In regions of the Amazon where deforestation is taking place, the main motive has been land speculation as a hedge against inflation, supported by government incentives. Large landowners can maintain their land titles simply by clearing the land for pasture – whether or nor they actually use it.

Within the forest itself recent conflicts have focussed on the creation of Extractive Reserves, which landowners oppose, and the invasion of Indian land by loggers and mining interests.

But the most intense disputes have had to do with the impact of large schemes, particularly the building of dams or major projects such as the Carajás Programme. As the Carajás Programme got under way, violent deaths in the region increased from virtually nil in the 1960s to 200 by 1986, when they accounted for two thirds of the total in Brazil. A report by Amnesty International in 1988 emphasized the connivance of police and the judiciary with land-grabbers against peasant farmers.

**Sources:** Amnesty International, *Brazil: Authorized Violence in Rural Areas*, London 1988; Comissão Pastoral da Terra, *Conflitos no campo*, Brasil 89, Goiânia 1990.





Photo : Mark Edwards/Still Pictures

**L**OOK at the balance sheet. Clearing the Amazon produces hardwoods which are essential for nothing. Dams flood the forest to generate electricity to make aluminium for throw-away cans. Iron ore is dug out of the ground to be sold at throw-away prices. Diseased cattle stroll about farting their greenhouse gases into the atmosphere to pander to a particular dietary preference in the cities. Rivers are polluted with deadly mercury to produce gold that is smuggled out through Uruguay to languish in the vaults of Swiss banks. The mass of the people of the Amazon are corralled into poverty, fearing for their lives. Indigenous people are persecuted to the verge of extinction. Can it really be for *this* that the greatest forest on earth is being made to disappear?

'Well,' says Philip Fearnside, one of the top scientific authorities on the Amazon, who works in Manaus, 'it's a question of who is profiting. If that profit – and the costs – were evenly distributed, it wouldn't be happening. The fact is that influential people are making money and the poor people out in the forest are paying the cost. It's all perfectly logical from the point of view of the people who are making the money.'

Anthony Anderson, another American expert, who works for the Ford Foundation in Rio de Janeiro, makes a similar point. 'Ranchers *can't* have an environmental ethic', he says. 'The key to environmental conservation in countries where the majority of people are poor is' to *engage* them. They have a pretty innate sense that the forest is where

## Gathering strength

**Which is the more important question – who does the damage or what does the damage? David Ransom reaches a conclusion that will not please everyone.**

their livelihoods remain.'

But it is the ranchers and their like who rule Brazil. There are, it seems to me, just two simple reasons why they do. The first is that when real political change – and agrarian reform in particular – last threatened to become a serious possibility there was a military coup. For 20 years after 1964 the country descended into a reign of official terror from which the people of Brazil have yet to recover fully.

It was the military dictatorship that launched the modern invasion of the Amazon. They built the roads and reinforced the network of cronyism from which the destroyers of the Amazon feed. To avoid political and social change they 'colonized' the rainforest: 'A land without people for people without land' was how the well-worn phrase went. In the process, oblivious of the people who actually did live in the Amazon, and in pursuit of grandiose 'strategic' objectives of the kind that appeal to the military mind, they saddled the people of Brazil with a foreign

debt of quite astronomic proportions.

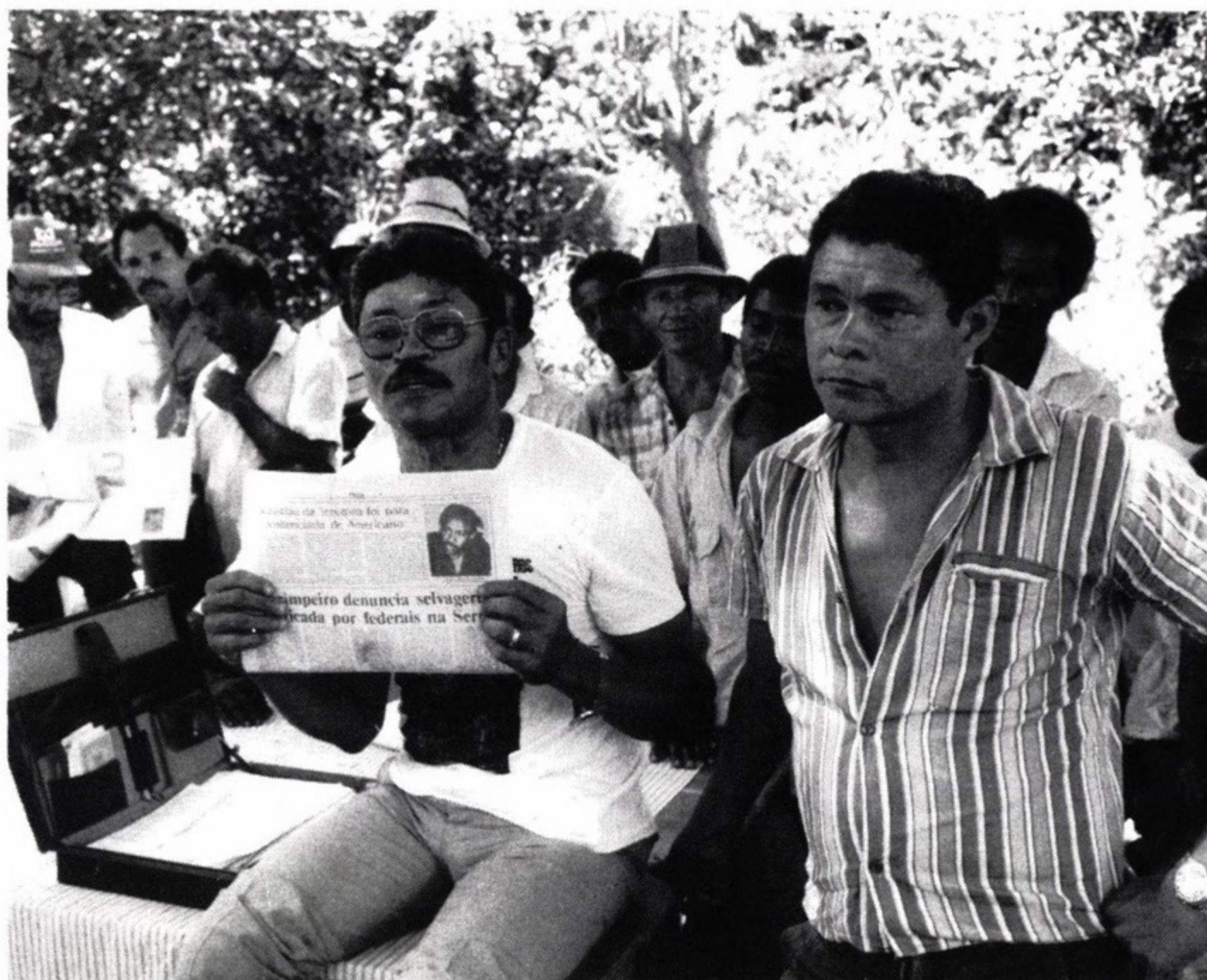
This brings me to the second reason why the ranchers and their like still rule Brazil. Quite simply it suits their creditors. The military coup of 1964 was backed directly by the US and tacitly by everyone else with a vested interest in the country. Today their priority is the repayment of the Brazilian foreign debt, not the preservation of the Amazon. The issue isn't that the destruction of the rainforest brings in lots of foreign currency with which to pay back the debt. It doesn't. More to the point is that real political change might lead to the renunciation of debt by people who feel, quite rightly, that they never signed the contract or benefited from its bounty.

So the Amazon is made to serve as a social 'safety valve', a sort of slush fund to keep the power brokers happy and the principle of debt repayment intact. What's so daft and almost pathologically criminal about it is that Brazil's creditors are in practice writing the debt off as fast as they can.

And, sadly enough, the international agencies that should know better are toeing the same line. Just about every expert on rainforests I talked to reserved their most virulent attacks for the United Nations Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO). It is the 'lead' organization in what is known as the Tropical Forestry Action Plan, which rides on the back of environmental concern while in practice promoting the interests of industrial forestry and forest-based industries.<sup>1</sup>

It would be easy and possibly quite true to say that deforestation could be





Organized crime: Almir Santos, a leader of landless squatters in the 'Parrot's Beak', displays a newspaper picture of Sebastião Teresona. Teresona has been arrested and charged with the murder of dozens of squatters in the State of Pará. The squatters say that Teresona is a *pistolero* (gunman) hired by local *fazendeiros* (ranchers) for \$20 a killing. He is missing one finger on his right hand, which the squatters say was cut off with a machete by one of his victims before his death. People at the meeting come forward with horrific details of friends and relatives who have been murdered, homes cut in half with chain saws, crops burned just before harvest time: 'The men who kill the forest are the ones who kill the people' they say.

Story : Herbert Girardet; Photo : Mark Edwards/Still Pictures

stopped tomorrow if a) Brazil's foreign debt were written off b) there were agrarian reform and c) cattle ranching, logging and mining were no longer promoted by the Government and international agencies alike. End of argument.

The trouble is that no-one I met seriously believes that any of this is likely to happen tomorrow, or even the day after. And make no mistake, the situation of the people of the Amazon is deteriorating as fast as that of the rainforest itself – if not faster. So you have to try to puzzle out what might reasonably be done in the meantime. And that is precisely what many Brazilians have already been doing for some time.

I am told that there are upwards of 2,000 'non-governmental organizations' (NGOs) at work in the Amazon. That might mean anything. But what is not really in doubt, I think, is that the unrest that began in the late 1970s marked a turning point not just for the military dictatorship but for many of the individual people and groups I spoke to as well.

Claudia Andrujar escaped from Hungary with her mother during the Second World War. The rest of her family did not survive. 'I somehow always felt that I too was one of the people who had been condemned to disappear,' she says.

She finally settled in Brazil and began a successful career as a professional photographer. By the mid-1970s she was beginning to tire of commercial photo-

graphic assignments. She took time out and went off to study the Yanomami Indians on the border between Brazil and Venezuela. She was to spend some six years living with them. 'I saw disease arriving with the road. The people were totally unprepared. Then came the *garimpeiros*, the gold panners. I was there, witnessing the death of the people and trying to do something to help them survive.'

Expelled from the area by the Government, she launched a campaign in São Paulo to create a Yanomami Park.



Claudia Andrujar: asker of awkward questions.

When I met her she had just returned from meeting the Minister of Justice, Jarbas Passarinho ('Little Bird'). He is a military man, the link between the civilian Government of President Collor and the military establishment.

'I asked him: "Well, what do you think? How are you going to help the Yanomami people?" He said: "You know, there's an awful lot of opposition to the creation of the Park." He talked a lot about "geopolitical considerations". I've heard this kind of talk since the 1970s and I thought they'd got over it. I thought President Collor wanted to change the image of, well, the word 'genocide' has been used even here in Brazil. But at the moment he is not in a position to oppose the military ...'

People like Claudia are clearly doing much to try and bring about change from within Brazil. But what can people outside the country do? 'The most important thing you can do,' says Claudia, 'is to be willing to learn more and understand the problem, because it is only through understanding that you will find out what has to be done.'

When I set out on this trip I was anxious to discover a model of 'sustainable' development, a way of protecting the forest while improving the lives of the people, that we might all (smugly?) subscribe to. What I actually found out is that no such model yet exists. The best that experts can provide for us is some kind of 'goal', a framework of values yet to be filled with knowledge and experience.

Consider this. Everywhere in the Amazon the destruction of the forest has followed the building of roads. The BR 364 has ripped through Rondônia and there are plans to drive it on through Acre to Peru and the Pacific, opening the veins of the Amazon to the thirst of the Japanese for hardwoods and raw materials. José Lutzemburger, the celebrated environmentalist who is now Brazil's Minister for the Environment, has gone on record to say that the road will not go through. Surely, I thought, any self-respecting environmentalist must welcome this.

But no-one I spoke to in Acre either believes or agrees with it. 'There's nothing wrong with roads, you know', Macedo said to me. 'It's who and what they are used for that matters.'

I think he's right. You can't condemn the people of Acre to live forever in the nineteenth century. If you do they will simply leave the forest and there will be no-one to protect it. Banning roads in the Amazon doesn't quench the rich world's thirst for drugs and hardwoods, bring about agrarian reform or tackle the gross injustice of Brazilian society.

Again, the thickest smoke over the poorest part of Paragominas comes from the top of a hill. Fully prepared for yet another mental condemnation of the *patrões*, what I actually found was a



ragged-trousered collective of very poor people using the waste wood left by the sawmills to make charcoal. The operation was overseen by an old, tough, black woman wearing a baseball hat.

Should I applaud the collective or condemn the destruction? Close down the charcoal collective and you have a dozen or more destitute families ready to cut down the forest instead – and the wood still goes to waste. The point is that simple, sure-fire prohibitions in response to complex human situations can lead us to false conclusions that may actually make things worse.

Many of the people I met were very anxious indeed to develop markets for 'sustainable' products that don't damage the forest – and, above all, that can provide a decent income. Brazil nuts are one of the most important of these. So yes, go out and buy as many as you can from the co-operatives that produce them in Extractive Reserves. That means finding out about your nearest 'alternative traders' who take a detailed interest in how the products they sell are produced and buying from them, not from the supermarket.

The point is that in the process you have taken an active interest in what is going on – become 'engaged'. And that is what *everyone* I met in the Amazon, without exception, wants you to do. You might go on from there to support an immediate ban on the trade in tropical hardwoods, which is urgently needed, or seek out beautiful Kampa handicrafts when and if they reach the market. And you might go on from *that* to wonder why your own government may be supporting the *status quo* in Brazil and demanding the blood of the Amazon in payment of its ill-gotten debts.

There would then, I think, be no shortage of obvious things for you to do, or of reasons for doing them. In supporting, say, groups that work for human rights and land reform in Latin America you would also be engaged in the struggle to save the Amazon forest, in bringing rich world concern with the environment together with Third World concern for human life.

For myself, I shall not forget sitting, tired, hot and hungry, in the middle of a *babassu* palm grove on land still owned by former President Sarney, one of the biggest landowners in Maranhão. Around me were people who had 'invaded' it, talking about the violence they had endured and what they need now. Rather timidly I asked whether Brazil might one day be run, not by the hated *patrões* and *fazendeiros*, but by them. There was a pause. 'Yes!' said the woman sitting next to me. Suddenly, quite unexpectedly, she smiled. Then everyone burst into laughter and applause. □

1 See, for example, Larry Lohmann and Marcus Colchester, 'Paved with Good Intentions' in *The Ecologist*, May/June 1990.

## Worth reading on ... THE AMAZON

By far the most interesting and convincing recent work on the Amazon is S Hecht and A Cockburn *The Fate of the Forest* (Verso 1989, also available in Penguin 1990). Lighter and eccentric travelogues are Redmond O'Hanlon *In Trouble Again* (Penguin 1989) and Stephen Nugent *Big Mouth – the Amazon Speaks* (Fourth Estate 1990). But I'm not sure they improve much on Henry W Bates' classic *The Naturalist on the River Amazon*, first published in 1864 (reprinted by John Murray, 1964) – it's worth taking the trouble to find this one. On the indigenous peoples, John Hemming's *Amazon Frontier: the Defeat of the Brazilian Indians* (Macmillan 1987) is thorough, readable if a bit dense. For anyone interested in going more deeply into the

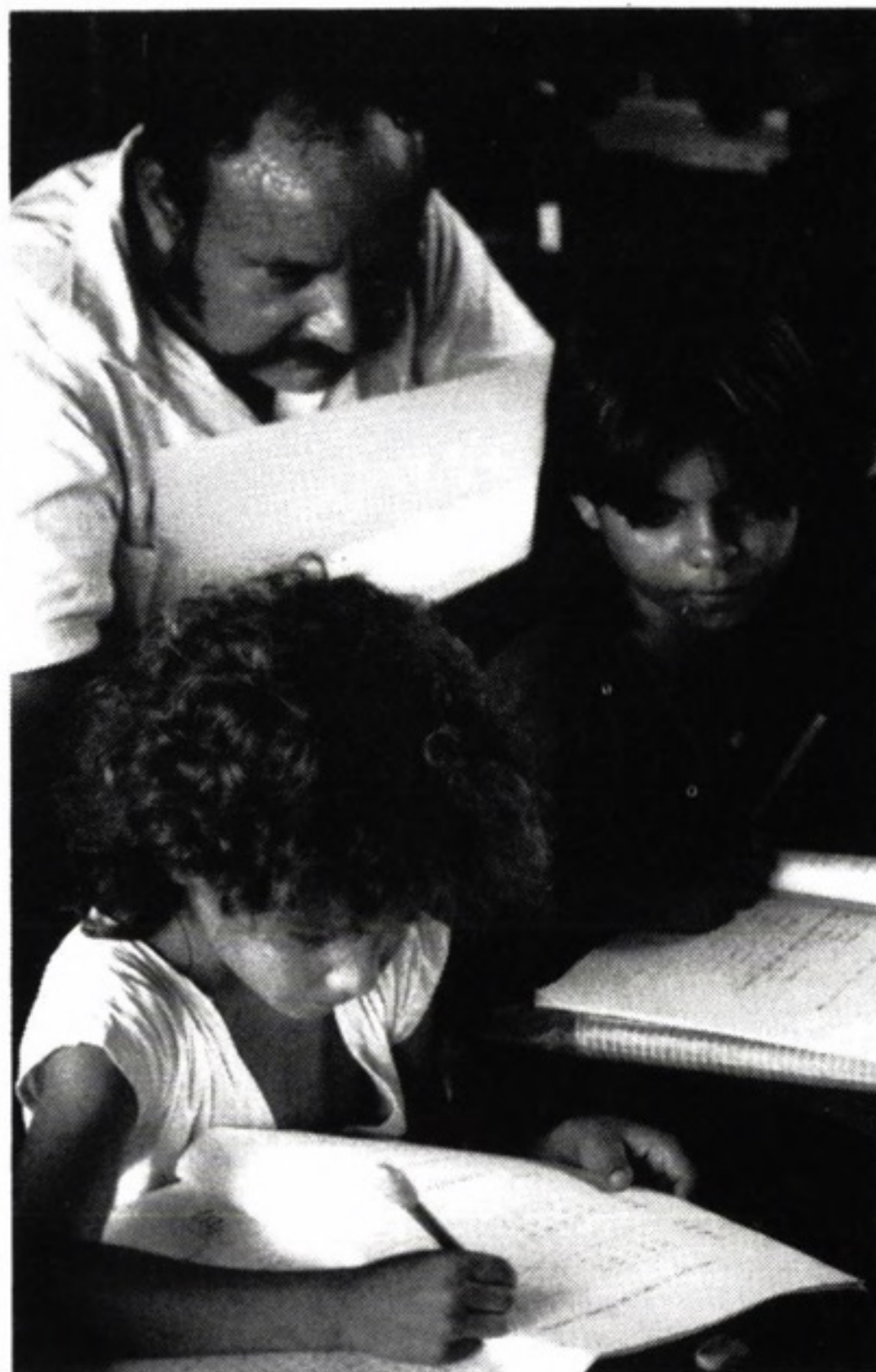
environmental issues, try Anthony B Anderson *Alternatives to Deforestation* (Colombia University Press 1990) or (deeper still) Ghilleen Prance and Thomas Lovejoy *Key Environments: Amazonia* (Pergamon 1985) though you'll need about \$60 to buy it if you can't get it from a library.

For a quick and informative read that deals with most of the important issues in a crisp fashion you can't do better than *Fight for the Forest: Chico Mendes in his Own Words* (Latin America Bureau 1989), and on land rights read Sue Branford and Oriana Glock, *The Last Frontier: Fighting Over Land in the Amazon* (Zed Press 1985). For an up-to-date account of Brazil covering some of the same places and issues as this magazine order Neil Macdonald's *Brazil – A Mask Called Progress* from Oxfam Publications, PO Box 120, Oxford OX2 7DZ, UK, price £4.95.

## USEFUL ADDRESSES

### BRAZIL:

**União das Nações Indígenas (UNI)** (Union of Indigenous Nations): Ailton Krenak, National Co-ordinator, Praça Enio Barbato s/n, 05.517 São Paulo, SP. **Movimento de Mulheres do Campo e da Cidade**



(Movement of Rural and Urban Women): Rua Manoel Barata 47, sala 305, Centro, 66.020 Belém, PA. **Comissão pela Criação do Parque Yanomami** (Commission for the Creation of the Yanomami Park): Claudia Andrujar, Rua Manoel da Nobrega 111, 3 andar, cj 32, 04.001 São Paulo, SP. **FASE** (Federation of Organizations for Social and Educational Assistance), Rua Bento Lisboa, 58, 22.227 Rio de Janeiro, RJ. **Conselho Nacional Dos Seringueiros** (National Council of Rubber Tappers), Rua Guanabara 150, Estação Experimental,

69.900 Rio Branco, AC.

**Upper Juruá Valley Extractive Reserve:** fundraising and support for the Co-operative Association is being co-ordinated by **The Gaia Foundation**, 18 Well Walk, London NW3 1LD.

Two important national organizations that can put you in touch with others (and can usually answer queries in English) are: **IBASE**, Rua Vicente de Souza, 29, Botafogo, 22.251 Rio de Janeiro, RJ. **CEDI**, Av Higienópolis 983, 01.238 São Paulo, SP.

### AOTEAROA (New Zealand):

**Maruia Society**, Box 756 Nelson. **Pacific Institute of Resource Management**, Box 10123 Wellington.

### AUSTRALIA:

**Australian Conservation Foundation**, 340 Gore St, Fitzroy, Vic. 3065. **Greenpeace**, 37 Nicholson Road, Balmain, NSW 2041.

### CANADA:

**Friends of the Rainforest**, Box 4612, Ste E, Ottawa, Ont K15 5H8. **Western Wilderness Committee**, 20 Water St, Vancouver, BC V6B 1A4. **Probe International**, 225 Brunswick Ave, Toronto, Ont M5S 2M6.

### UK:

**Survival International**, 310 Edgware Road, London W2 1DY. **Amnesty International**, 1 Easton Street, London WC1X 8DJ. **Minewatch**, 218 Liverpool Road, London N1 1LE. **Oxfam UK**, 274 Banbury Road, Oxford OX2 7DZ.

### US:

**Rainforest Action Network**, 301 Broadway, Suite A, San Francisco CA 94133. **Environmental Defense Fund**, 1616 P St, NW, Washington DC 20010.





**While the Gulf war raged, people in Africa were facing famine. The war is now over, but some 20 million Africans are still set to starve to death. For the price of five Tornado aircraft these 20 million people could be fed for a month. With this in mind, NI decided to devote this month's Update pages to Africa.**

## Gulf war

### Fall out

As concern about Kuwait and the Middle East continues to dominate world headlines, a new Report aims to draw attention to the effects of the Gulf war on developing countries.

#### The cost of war



At least 40 of the poorer countries are facing the equivalent of a natural disaster, says the Report, jointly issued by aid agencies including Save the Children Fund and Christian Aid.

The war has delivered devastation to the world's poor as hundreds of thousands of workers from developing countries have had to flee the region, abandoning their savings, possessions and livelihoods. India, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh are among countries reeling from the blow to their economies as repatriated workers struggle to find a living at home.

Nearer the Gulf, Yemen stands to lose at least 10 per cent of its Gross National Product with little hope of an adequate international response. Sudan has lost remittances from 35,000 expatriate workers. Both countries are being black-balled as a result of their political stance on the war. Yemen's development aid from the US has reportedly been cut from \$22 million to \$2.9 million.

In Sudan, government estimates put the costs of the war at \$755 million. The country is in arrears with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and has recently been declared 'non-cooperative'. No more IMF funds will be available and World Bank lending is effectively at a standstill.

Sub-Saharan Africa is especially vulnerable. Higher oil prices just before the war have made the costs of oil imports, transport and freight shoot up. The knock-on effect is that even basic foodstuffs are dearer.

Public transport in Uganda has been severely curtailed or become so expensive that thousands more now have to walk miles to get to work or school. Kerosene prices in many countries have risen faster than petrol, meaning that the poor (who tend to cook by kerosene) bear a disproportionate share of the price-hike burden.

In Zimbabwe fuel prices have risen by 50 per cent. The country, like many others in Africa,

depends on imported refined oil. Before the war it obtained petroleum from Kuwait at a discount rate.

Nigeria, an oil exporter, has promised aid to poorer African countries if oil prices go up.

All developing countries are feeling the economic pinch as their export products are being devalued. For Africa this is compounded by the severe famine conditions and political turmoil in many regions. This is not the time for the developed world to sink into donor fatigue. Additional aid is needed with fewer strings attached, and fast.

'In any war,' stressed Olusegun Obasanjo, Nigeria's former President, 'humanity is a victim ... and Africa is particularly the biggest loser.'

**The Economic Impact of the Gulf Crisis on Third World Countries/Oxfam, Save the Children Fund, World Development Movement, CAFOD, CIIR and Christian Aid, and Kingsley Moghalu/Newslink Africa**

## Slavery

### Talking 'bout reparation

Slavery will be the hot issue on the agenda at the June meeting of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) taking place in Nigeria. The summit will be urged to seek reparation payments from the former slave-trading countries to compensate black people in Africa and the diaspora for the sufferings they endured from slavery.

The OAU, chaired by Nigerian President Ibrahim Babangida – himself a strong advocate of reparation – will be asked to present a formal case to the international community on behalf of black people worldwide.

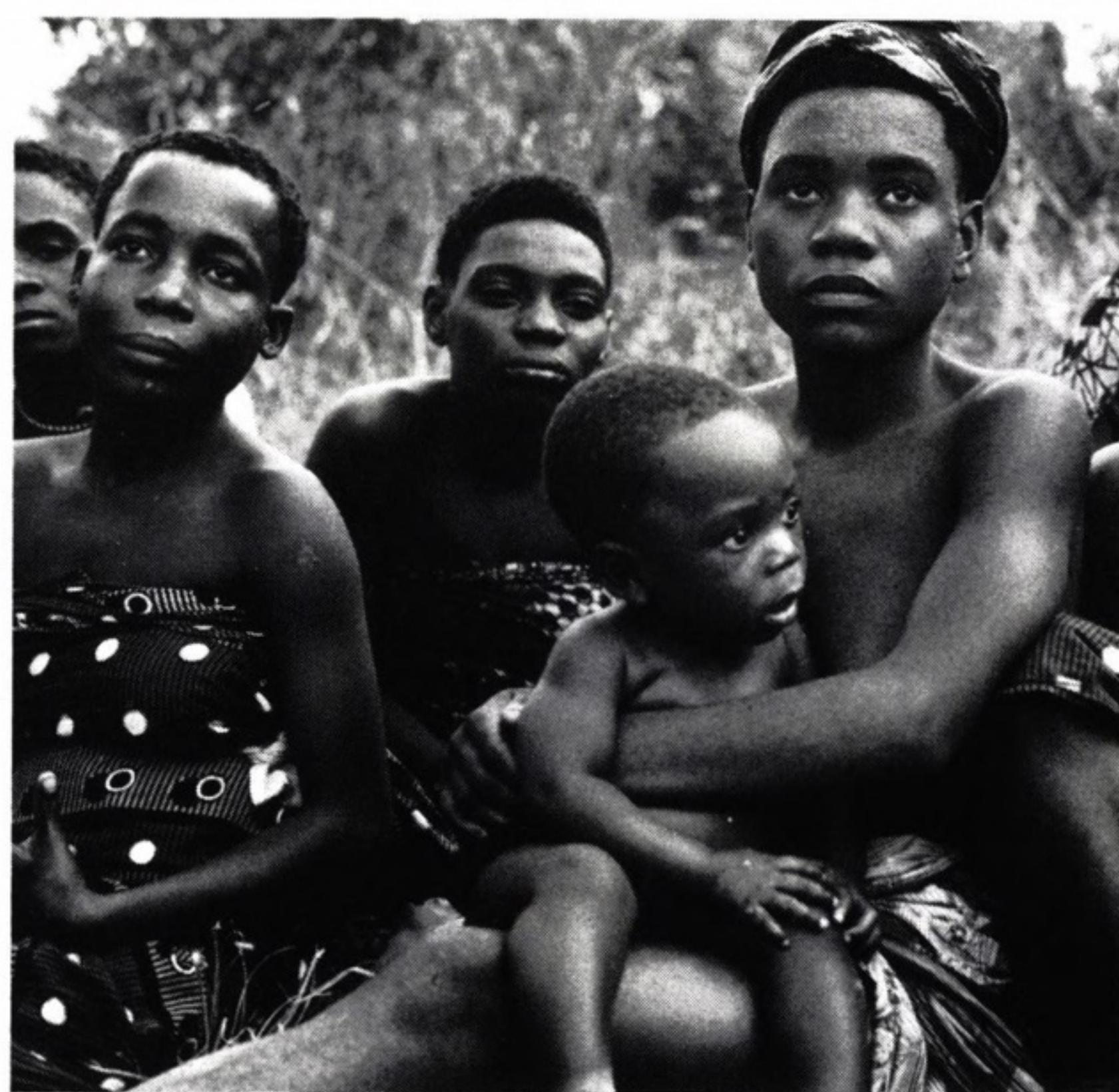
Chief Bashorun M K O Abiola, a newspaper publisher, first raised the issue of reparations in an address last year to an American audience. Abiola's case was that if Germany could be made to pay reparations for the damage done to Europe in the First World War and Israel compensated for the sufferings

of the Jewish people in the Holocaust, then Africa should be paid reparations for the millions of people it lost during the hundreds of years of slavery.

Black American response was so positive that a meeting was called in December in Lagos, attended by Africans and black people from overseas including Bernie Grant, a British Member of Parliament, US Senator Bill Owens and Martin Luther King III, son of the assassinated civil rights leader.

In his address, President Babangida pointed out that before the slave trade Africa was developing along lines that would have made it the equal of Europe in economic self-sufficiency. Jamaican High Commissioner to Nigeria, Dr Dudley Thompson, observed that the only reparation paid at the end of slavery was to the slave owners for loss of property.

The final resolution of the conference recognized that 'merely appealing to the consciences' of the international



**Biggest debt: Africa seeks redress for the millions of people it lost during the centuries of slavery.**

community to pay reparations to Africa would lead to nowhere.

Instead a think-tank is being created, made up of trained specialists, to provide the data base

for building up a 'formidable case' for reparations.

**Cameron Duodu/Gemini**



## Democracy

### Multi-party time

After the promised return to multi-partyism in Zambia, reluctantly endorsed by President Kenneth Kaunda, Zambians are looking forward to the elections scheduled for October 1991. Violent riots and a strong campaign paved the way to Kaunda's 'decent exit' from power, after 26 years during which he kept the lid on all forms of political pressure.

Elsewhere in Africa multi-partyism is also flavour of the year, encouraged now by the same Western powers who backed many of the dictators and military men of the past decades. Except for cases where people have taken to the streets, it is the newly-discovered fervour of the World Bank and Western powers for 'human rights' and political pluralism which has forced the change by making these a condition for further aid.

Although ordinary people in Africa had long recognized the injustices of their governments, they could not until now express their views for fear of further repression – repression which

often came with the complicity of the West.

France, for example, actively aided suppression of dissident movements in Francophone countries; the US created Mobutu Sese Seko in Zaire and nurtured Samuel Doe in Liberia, while Britain has supported Daniel arap Moi in Kenya.

But now it's all change. For the West, the end of the Cold War and subsequent democratization in Eastern Europe means there can be room for a little more democracy in Africa too – and indeed this is perhaps the surest way to keep 'friendly' leaders in power.

The ripples of change from Eastern Europe brought pro-democracy demonstrators out on the streets in Ivory Coast last year, forcing President Houphouët-Boigny to hold elections in November. But his *Parti Democratique de la Côte d'Ivoire* was returned to power, amid allegations of vote-rigging.

In North Africa, Libya, Morocco, Mauritania, Niger and Chad have shown few signs of reform. In the sub-Saharan region, the governments of Kenya, Ghana, Congo,

Togo, Sierra Leone, Ethiopia, Central African Republic, Burkina Faso, Nigeria and Zaire are also dragging their feet and sometimes meeting protest with violence – as with President Mobutu's show of 'glasnost' in Zaire which disappeared as he ordered in the troops to quell student protest.

Zimbabwe's President Mugabe, like Kaunda in Zambia, has grudgingly introduced pluralism. Uganda's Museveni is hanging on for another four years, to give his National Resistance Movement 'time to implement its programmes'. Multi-party systems in themselves are no guarantee of democratic rights and freedoms, but they are an important first step. And while some vote-rigging will undoubtedly continue as dictators resist the changes, Africa's home-grown democracies in Mauritius, Senegal, The Gambia and Botswana show that democratic pluralism is possible, without bloodshed, and with benefit to the people.

Ogen Kevin Aliro  
Elias Nyakutemba/Gemini



**Sweeping clean in Mauritius: democracy could catch on in Africa.**

Photo: Sven Simon Bonn

## Food

### Grain of hope

Coalition casualties in the Gulf war were counted in tens; Iraqi casualties in hundreds of thousands – but millions of Africans face death by famine this year. Twenty million people are at risk on the continent, according to aid agencies. As part of its aid

efforts Oxfam UK has sent a ship, 'The Grain of Hope', loaded with enough grain to feed 265,000 people for one month. But this is not nearly enough. Governments need to pledge – and deliver – food urgently to the following countries:

#### Ethiopia

Six million people at risk, plus 150,000 refugees from Somalia.

Total food requirements are 941,593 tonnes. 671,476 tonnes still need to be pledged. Pledges made by the US Government and the EEC not yet confirmed.

Politically the prospects for a successful relief operation are better now than for many years, provided food is delivered and donors ensure all routes are fully utilized.

#### Sudan

Over seven million people at risk. Total food requirements are 1,129,000 tonnes. By February 1 only 19,500 tonnes of relief food had been delivered out of 102,000 tonnes pledged.

Disagreement between the Government of Sudan and the donors over the scale of the problem and food distribution plans is holding up pledges. Oxfam believes that, given purchase and shipping times of at least three months, donors must not wait for the distribution plans to be put into place before committing food.

#### Mozambique

Nearly two million war-displaced people lack enough food, as do people in the cities. The shortfall of food aid amounts to more than 60,000 tonnes. Attacks on grain convoys by the

rebel Mozambique National Resistance (MNR) have virtually stopped grain movements.

Donors do not appear to be responding speedily or positively to needs, as agreed by the UN in December.

#### Malawi

Three million people hit by drought. The Government is appealing for 77,000 tonnes of food. Malawi hosts about one million refugees from Mozambique.

#### Angola

Drought and war have placed 1.9 million people at risk of starvation. Agricultural production has been reduced by 75 per cent; over one million people have fled their homes in rural areas threatened by fighting.

#### Liberia

Over one million people are displaced due to the civil war and require food. Six thousand tonnes of rice are needed every month but only 3,000 tonnes are being delivered.

#### Somalia

Relief needs will be ascertained only when order is established.

**Don't forget Africa/Oxfam**





## CUBA

## Moscow's problems, Havana's nightmares

As a result of the cutbacks in the former flood of Soviet aid, Cuba is facing its most severe challenge since the US blockade of the island began in 1962. Beginning this year, 1991, all Soviet transactions with Cuba will be reckoned at world prices and paid for in hard currencies. As Castro put it, 'We have to be prepared to work with less and less ... no-one knows what our trade relationship with the USSR will be; it is almost impossible to know how much oil and raw materials we will get in 1991 and under what conditions.'

As part of the austerity plan teams of draft animals have begun to replace tractors in the province of Granma; while orders are out to use tallow rather than lamp oil for lighting in the countryside.

To save fuel in buses, the Government is importing 200,000 bicycles. Several publications have closed down because of lack of paper, and thousands of state employees are being laid off – though with the promise of state unemployment assistance.

The last overseas journalist who reported scarcities was expelled from the country. He wrote that he could not find chicken, beef, flour or milk for sale on the island.

*From El Tiempo of Bogota, reported in World Press Review Vol 38, No 1*

## ARMS TRADE

## Guns for Jews

A cynical deal consisting of Israel selling arms to Ethiopia in exchange for Ethiopian Jews has come to light despite official denials. About 250 of such Jews, known as Falashas, have finally arrived in Israel after months of being stranded in appalling conditions in Addis Ababa as they waited to emigrate. It is believed the delay was caused by the Ethiopian Government's refusal to allow the Falasha out of the country until Israel increased its arms exports. Tel Aviv had previously supplied such weapons as fragmentation bombs which the Ethiopian army used in its Eritrean campaign. The separatist movements, on the other hand, have allegedly been supplied by Arab states.

*From The Independent, 20.11.90*

## SOUTH AFRICA

## Sanctions busters

Detailed research findings on the main petroleum suppliers to South Africa for 1989, have just been released. The main findings include:

- The shipping companies responsible for transporting the fuel are confined to an increasingly limited group. More than 45 per cent of the fuel was carried by 17 tankers belonging to one shipping company, World-Wide Shipping of Hong Kong. A number of shipping companies registered in Greece/UK

accounted for a further 35 per cent of the fuel imported.

- Countries whose companies and flags are linked with deliveries are Hong Kong, Liberia, United Kingdom, Greece and Cyprus. If the figure for Hong Kong – a country where the UK holds sovereignty – is included with the latter then the UK is linked to 34 of the 39 deliveries. That is 88 per cent of the fuel deliveries which were identified.

- At least 37 of the 39 tankers sailing to South Africa come from the Middle East. The United Arab Emirates accounted for half the fuel, while six tankers bringing 15 per cent of the fuel sailed from Egypt.

As a postscript: the resolution on the oil embargo against South Africa was carried overwhelmingly at the United Nations on 19 December, 1990. The only countries voting against were the UK and the US.

*From Newsletter on the Oil Embargo against South Africa, No.22 1991*

## DRUGS

## Bright red

For some Japanese the end-of-year parties are a nightmare. The founder of the Non-Drinkers Association, Ken Yoshida, is one. 'Even a couple of glasses of beer make me go bright red and unable to sit or stand up straight,' says Yoshida. Yet Japanese men face great pressure to drink socially. Now medical evidence shows that as many as half of all Japanese people may, for genetic reasons, be deficient in the particular enzymes which rid the body of alcohol once it has been consumed.

*Reuters*

## WORLD BANK

## Bangkok's bank holidays

Thai students are expected to receive a four-day holiday later this year, thanks to the World Bank and IMF. To ensure that the 15,000 or so very important visitors for the World Bank/IMF meeting in October 1991 do not spend all their time stuck in Bangkok's notorious traffic jams, schools

will be closed. The intention is to keep students and their buses off the roads. For the only routes to the conference hall from the major hotels are along roads jammed with bumper-to-bumper traffic from early morning until well into the night.

*From Far Eastern Economic Review, Vol 151 No 5 1991*

## MULTINATIONAL CORPORATIONS

## Top of the pops

British Aerospace has retained its position at the top of the British export league. The *Financial Times* list of the top 100 exporters ranks BAe (also the UK's largest military exporter) above other corporate giants such as British Petroleum and Rank Xerox.

However French arms exports dropped by nearly 90 per cent in 1990, with the biggest decline in sales to the Middle East and North Africa.

*From Campaign Against the Arms Trade Newsletter, No 106*

## THE OZONE LAYER

## Expanding hole

Chemicals that are eating a hole in the earth's protective ozone layer are still being released into the air at record levels, despite international agreements to phase out their use. This is the conclusion of F Sherwood Rowland, University of California scientist, who discovered the link between chlorofluorocarbons and the ozone layer 17 years ago. Latest tests show emission of CFCs reached a record high in 1990 and were still growing.

With no fall-off in CFCs, the worst is yet to come for the expanding hole in the ozone shield. The hole through which the harmful ultraviolet radiation rays of the sun can pour is expected to continue to expand until 2010 – even if controls which are now in place are effective.

*From Consumer Currents, No. 132, 1991*

## "endquote"

**'When you take an Aboriginal from their land, you take them from the spirit that is giving them life. You end up with shells of human beings, living in other peoples' countries.'**  
*Pat Dodson, Central Lands Council, Australia.*





# Choice

**A Western woman goes to live in Pakistan. A Pakistani woman comes to live in the West. Both have to adjust to different cultures. But there is a crucial difference as Maria Naseem – the Western woman – discovers.**

**W**HEN summer was approaching – with a hazy heat and threatening stillness in the air – I went to stay with a friend in a small village south-west of Lahore. Fourteen family members were cramped into the two-roomed house and small yard when I arrived. With flies hovering around me I sat in the yard surrounded by many pairs of large, watchful eyes. Desperately I tried not to drop my food – guiding the thin, runny curry into a fold of bread. Self-conscious and humiliated I wanted to shout at the tiny children who gawped at me like a trapped animal in a cage and at the older women who sniggered behind their veils.

My silent irritation increased when at night the father told me that they'd made a bed for me with the rest of the family. Never in my life had I so badly wanted to be left alone to sweat, to curse and to dream of the cool, green hills of England. When my friend gently explained to her father that I would be happier in the other room he was horrified 'If I went to stay with friends and they made me sleep in a room all of my own I would think I was being punished. But it's your choice!' And then he walked off, shaking his head, to change the sleeping arrangements.

I went to Pakistan with a suitcase of expectations and a mission to fight alongside the local people for change. The position of women, poverty, child labour; these were my priorities. Within a month most of these preconceptions shattered as I realized I could hardly communicate with the people let alone understand them. Almost unconsciously I began slipping into the lifestyle which was pulling at me and, indeed, welcoming me. By the time I left Pakistan I was wholly accustomed to sharing not only bedrooms with friends and their families but beds also. I'd have been hurt if having been invited to stay at someone's house I was not invited to sleep beside several women and half a dozen children. In the end I chose companionship against self-imposed loneliness.

Resettling in England – after 18 months away – I found myself rejecting the English way of life. But I had to be practical and readapt. Now I live in London in a close community of Asians and I enjoy a mixed lifestyle. I am lucky to have made these choices myself.

Shazia, however, could never break out of the conventions that

ruled her life. She's a Punjabi married to a Pathan whose family moved to West Germany in the 1980s, leaving Shazia, her husband and two children behind in the Old City of Peshawar. They enjoyed life there but always looked forward to the freedom of Germany. Shazia fantasized about strolling down brightly-lit streets arm-in-arm with her husband, he in his best suit, she in a skirt and blouse. When finally they reached Germany Shazia was awe-struck by the wide highways and the large, clean houses. Her mother-in-law was thrilled to see them and treated Shazia like an honoured guest.

But after several months Shazia realized that she had not once left the house. She was expected to do all the housework, wait on guests and look after the children. And she was followed around the house by a string of complaints from her mother-in-law.

One day the old woman announced a picnic and Shazia excitedly prepared the food – looking forward to her first outing. But the family left her behind. It was the beginning of Shazia's isolation.

'I became very fat because my mother-in-law insisted I eat rice and eggs daily,' she told me. 'I could feel the lumps in my flesh and my face was bloated. One day I decided to stand up to the old lady. I refused the rice. That night my husband came to my room and dragged me by my hair to where the old lady lay on her bed. He beat me and screamed that I'd made his mother ill by disobeying her. The family sat round pretending not to watch. The pain was terrible and the shame worse.'

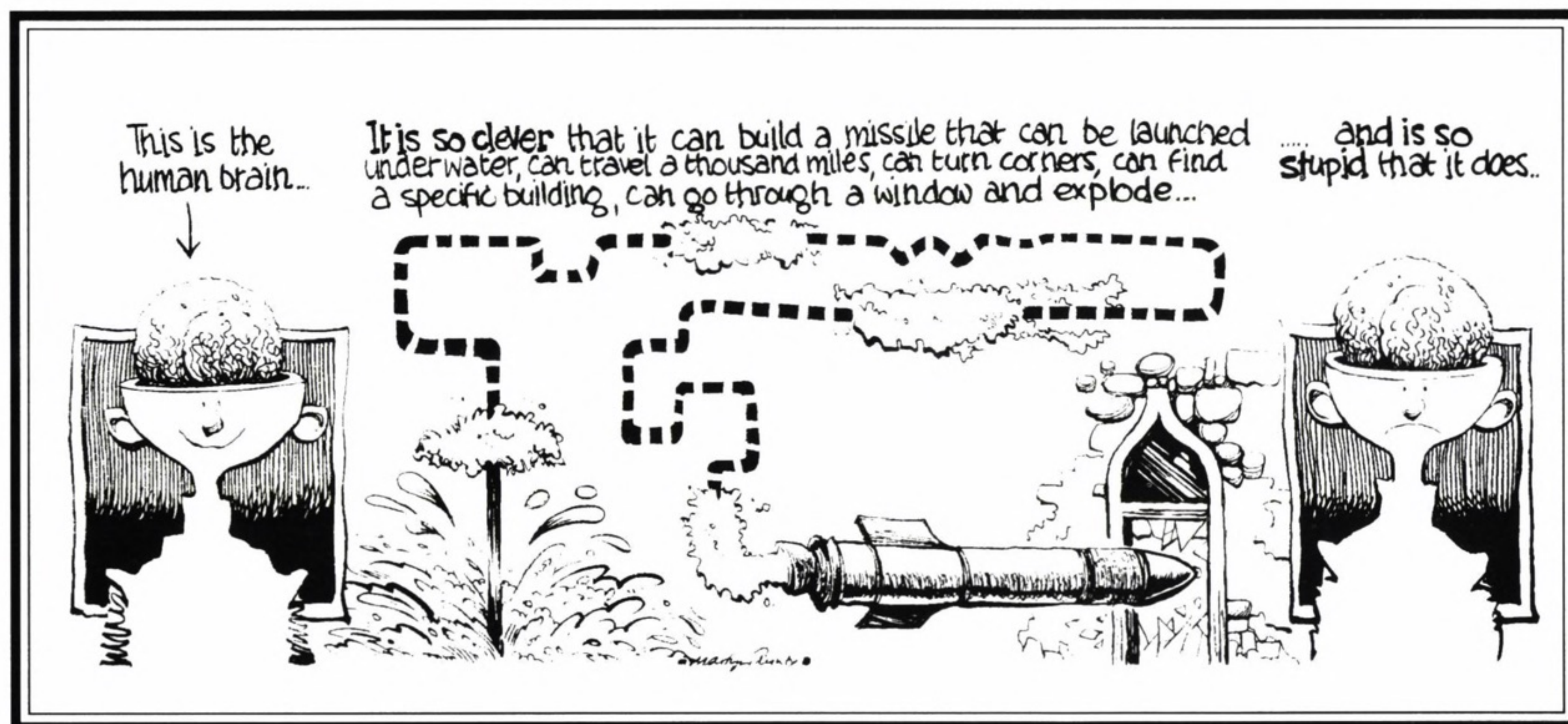
From then on Shazia set about trying to find ways of getting out of the house and meeting other people. 'I'm good at languages – I speak five already – so I found out about German evening classes,' Shazia's husband agreed to accompany her and, amazingly, his mother gave permission. But for one reason or another, Shazia herself was always prevented from going. And somehow the old woman always conspired to stop the couple sitting together or talking to each other. 'I know she is keeping my husband from me. She wants me to leave. After all I've served my purpose. The family received a large dowry ...'

Shazia now longs for Pakistan, for the busy, dusty bazaars where she could roam and haggle freely; for the little house she shared so happily with her husband; for the telegraph office from which she could ring her family in Lahore when she felt lonely.

'But how could I go back, now? How could I leave my children behind? No, I'm waiting for the day when my husband might defy his mother and leave this house for good with me by his side ...

Waiting is Shazia's only option. But she states quite calmly that she is strong – and that waiting, patiently, is her strength.

**Maria Naseem is a former NI staff member.**







The most English of Africans – Maynard Eziashi as *Mister Johnson*.

## ★ FILM

### **Mister Johnson**

directed by Bruce Beresford

Based on Joyce Cary's 1939 novel, *Mister Johnson* is set in 1923 West Africa and tells the story of one perpetually cheerful individual whose delusions about himself and the world around him eventually lead him into big trouble.

Mister Johnson (played by Maynard Eziashi) is black but he wears a smart white suit and has an inflated idea of his own importance as Chief Clerk to the British District Commissioner (Pierce Brosnan). Regarding himself as 'English' for reasons which the film never makes clear, he keeps losing his new wife because of the money he owes her father and then loses his prestige job when he becomes the scapegoat for the illicit diversion of government money to build a new road. However, refusing to let circumstances get the better of him, he keeps bouncing back with a never-ending smile and yet more dubious schemes of self-advancement.

*Mister Johnson* is a film about a limited consciousness which unfortunately betrays its own lack of insight in every scene. Replete with the same regulation lush landscapes and period costumes as *Out of Africa* and *White Mischief*, it proffers its supposedly tragicomic hero as an object of both pity and admiration but what comes across much more strongly is how much he's a safely sentimental fabrication designed to make (white) audiences feel good about themselves in pitying his plight. Johnson himself is presented shamelessly as a passive recipient of sympathy and the fact that there's no other dimension to his personality means that a

sugary condescension has to be the only alternative to rejecting both him and the film outright.

For a point of view we have the District Commissioner (complete with a prim young wife who isn't at all keen on Africa) and for an ambiguous symbol we have the road that Mister Johnson helps him build. Edward Woodward's storekeeper ('Treat 'em right and they aren't half as black as they look') and too many shots of the Union Jack fluttering in the breeze complete the colonial picture.

There's no anger, resentment or any rebellious sense of self in Johnson's shallow nature and finally that lack of reality makes the film's huge emotional investment in his fate risible. Bruce Beresford's last film was *Driving Miss Daisy*. On the basis of this effort, don't be surprised if his next is *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.

**Politics** ☆  
**Entertainment** ☆

### **Quigley Down Under**

directed by Simon Wincer

*Quigley Down Under* is a very pleasant surprise. Essentially it's a Western with Tom Selleck as the eponymous hero who takes himself to the Australian Outback like a cowboy Crocodile Dundee in reverse. There is an offbeat quirky love story too. But it also manages to be convincing about a particularly unpleasant phase in Australian history.

With his neatly trimmed beard, cowboy hat and huge six-foot rifle, Quigley cuts a very imposing dash when he steps off the boat in the port of Fremantle, Western Australia. It's the 1860s and he's been hired after answering a newspaper advertisement looking for 'the best long-distance sharpshooter in the world'.

Quigley thinks he's been

hired to shoot dingos but it turns out his English rancher employer has a much more sinister job for him – murdering the Aboriginal population on 'his' land at distances believed to be beyond normal rifle range. When he finds out, the battle lines are soon drawn between right and wrong, justice and genocide, peaceful Aborigine and warring rancher...

This is a hugely enjoyable film with all kinds of traditional heroic resonances allied to a strong revisionist sense of history and of the two contrasting cultures. Over 300 Aborigines are featured in the supporting cast and as extras and film pulls no punches in depicting their ancestors' treatment at the hands of expanding white settlement.

At the same time the movie's political heart fits perfectly within the framework of an otherwise old-fashioned adventure story, with an authoritative Selleck wholeheartedly into his role as a laconic but highly moral Western hero. Lots of spectacular rugged landscapes, an uplifting musical score and some perfectly judged dramatic moments complete a movie which manages to be both politically sound and very entertaining.

**Politics** ☆☆☆☆  
**Entertainment** ☆☆☆☆

## ★ MUSIC

### **30 Something**

by Carter the Unstoppable Sex Machine (*Rough Trade*)

1991 appears to belong to Carter. They are that rare thing, a band that wholeheartedly addresses its time, that truly belongs to it.

This is not a little paradoxical in that, a year ago, Carter

could have been written off as hopelessly out of step, an old-fashioned DIY pub-rock duo, two enraged anarcho-hippie jesters whose natural constituency was the dispossessed crowd haunting the dingier clubs of backroom Britain. Now, confirmed front-page regulars, they may well be the UK's first real post-Thatcher pop group.

Their single 'Bloodsport for All', included here, was cold-shouldered by the BBC along with other records proscribed during the Gulf War – 'Boom Bang-a-Bang', 'Waterloo' et al. In Carter's more flagrantly anti-militaristic case the terror seemed justified: 'Bloodsport for all said Corporal Flash/ And shoved me in a room full of CS gas'. 'Say It With Flowers' is even more apposite: 'The Christmas cards and greetings are arriving across the shifty sands to the war'.

Carter's success may be explained by the fact that the end of the Thatcher era demands that new pop heroes be embraced, if only for symbolic purposes. It's been a decade since political pop *per se* played any real part in the UK mainstream and, while rap has taken the lead in matters of polemic, Carter may be indicative of a trend among white indie bands to get political again.

Carter's bluff, seedy ebullience is a welcome antidote to the rather fey self-regard that's dominated indie pop over the last decade, from the Jesus and Mary Chain to the current blissed-out hedonism of Happy Mondays and their baggy ilk.

But it has to be said that Carter's musical style is limited in the extreme – for the most part, a ragged thrash that happens to be played largely on sequencers rather than guitars. The music and the rasping vocals give diminishing returns – the real pleasure has to be sought in the pun-laden lyrics, spiked with references to



Laura San Giacomo in the 'Aboriginal Western' *Quigley Down Under*.



Sondheim, Jimmy Webb, the Andrews Sisters, TV ads, all manner of pop detritus.

Alcoholism, wife-beating and consumerism as a metaphor for, seemingly, all the world's ills – lyrically Carter can carry all this in their stride, with the brio of the best jaundiced cartoonists.

After several years of pallid navel-gazing on the British indie scene, it's encouraging to see a spirited return of what used to be called dole-queue rock. It's just a shame that Carter's music fits this description a little too well.

Politics ☆☆☆☆

Entertainment ☆☆☆

## ★ BOOKS

### Our Grandmothers' Drums

by Mark Hudson (Secker & Warburg)

The Gambia. In a region bypassed by slave traders, colonialists and missionaries alike,

the action centres on Dulaba, close to a British Medical Research Council compound, a village which has been the subject of countless doctorate theses for visiting scientists and anthropologists. Here lived Mark Hudson in 1985. Out of that year and Hudson's quizzical relationship with the people of Dulaba has come a snorter of a book.

**Our Grandmothers' Drums** has picked up a well-justified couple of prizes as a 'travel' book. Yet 'travel' is a misnomer. Revealed is a cameo of the lives, the work, the loves, the worship, the ceremonies, the highs and lows of the people. 'Knowing nothing of the outside world, unaware even of Africa as a geographical entity, they called themselves simply the *mofingos* – the blacks – and they believed God had made them the poorest people of the earth.' It was particularly the lives of the women, their courage and good humour, which Hudson was determined to understand.

Certainly by the end you feel intimately acquainted with these women. The dilemma, of

course, is whether it is acceptable for a white man to describe the private world of black women. Should this be done through flat objective description, or can personal value judgements be made? It's a dilemma which Hudson tries to resolve through devastating honesty. Certainly when we come to the female circumcision ceremonies, Hudson is happy to apply a clear descriptive lens, puzzled as he is by the enthusiasm of the women and girls to mutilate and be mutilated. Elsewhere, at a flare-up in a soccer game with adversaries close to killing each other, he generalizes openly about African violence, suspicions and jealousies.

Nevertheless it is Hudson's personal interaction with the women which is most fascinating. He regularly goes to work with them in their fields, bravely if pathetically wielding a hoe, flirting and conversing with those around him. Yet what to do when the village is starving from lack of rains, with supplies of rice and millet exhausted? As a city-born fellow he gets a

headache if he doesn't eat every three or four hours. So how does he consume his mid-day sandwich in the fields, surrounded by gaunt faces? And of course there is Hudson's love life, and lack of it, with a number of women he loses his heart to.

Finally, there is the title, a metaphor perhaps for the tradition and fatalism of the village, for when these drums sound the women go to the bush for the circumcision rituals. No man is allowed – one caught spying had been beaten to death a few years previously. With clear, straightforward prose, **Our Grandmothers' Drums** describes an intimate acquaintanceship. It is a riveting read.

Politics ☆☆☆☆

Entertainment ☆☆☆☆☆

## ★ STAR RATING

|           |       |
|-----------|-------|
| Excellent | ☆☆☆☆☆ |
| Very good | ☆☆☆☆  |
| Good      | ☆☆☆   |
| Fair      | ☆☆    |
| Poor      | ☆     |

Reviews editor: Chris Brazier

## CLASSIC

# John Ruskin

... being the writer who connects the badlands of the 1860s with the dreams of the 1990s

**O**F all the prophets and Utopians crying out from that epicentre of unrestrained capitalism – nineteenth-century Britain – few reach so intimately into the green and spiritual yearnings of the late twentieth century as John Ruskin. His analysis of capitalist economics and society was an influence on political philosophers as diverse as Gandhi and Mao. But today it is also his writings on the true nature of wealth, the conditions for art and architecture, and our relationship with nature which reverberate with such power. But you won't find it easy to get copies of his work – books *about* him, yes, but not *by* him. Why?

His complicated eloquence, which enthralled ordinary people in the Working Men's Colleges of a century ago, seems difficult to people reared on the slogan, the six-second TV image and the headline; on the 'information management' and photo-journalism of modern life. Furthermore, Ruskin wrote about *everything*: from rock formations to dew-fed leaves; from pine trees to public health; from Gothic decoration to the uses of iron; from economics to window frames; and all of this often in the same volume. We are more used to specialists and the fragmented knowledge which goes with them.

What is available is **Ruskin Today**, Kenneth Clark's wonderful anthology of excerpts from Ruskin's writing. Clark offers more than a sample: his introductions take us on a guided tour through the vast labyrinth of Ruskin's collected works, pointing out the writer's contradictions and eccentricities as well as his poetry, clarity and humour.

Ruskin was an unrelenting opponent of nineteenth-century capitalism. Yet were his ghost to return and survey the contemporary world order he would change little of what he wrote. Many of the questions he raised have not really been answered in the intervening century – for example about the real nature of wealth. He was concerned about the horrors of material poverty brought about by exploitation. But he was also interested in how the more wealthy impoverish themselves.

'What is wealth?' Ruskin asked his complacent well-fed Victorian audiences time and again. Not money and mass production and consumption of goods. 'Wealth is nothing but life,' he replied. And by that he meant human intellectual and creative power used to create marvelous environments with scope for the expression of our innate spirituality. On those criteria Ruskin would have rated many indigenous pre-con-

quest peoples as wealthier than the rich of new York, and in fact saw the craftspeople of Italy's medieval and renaissance cities as wealthier than the entrepreneurs of Manchester's suburbs.

Ruskin (like Marx) saw that true wealth was public wealth: spaces and buildings and institutions used by everybody should be lavish and beautiful; those for private use, simple and modest. He saw this principle illustrated in Renaissance Italy. There the greatest artists of the day were commissioned to build and paint town halls (and even, in Venice, orphan schools) while the private houses of the great banking families were relatively simple.

And were his ghost to return today it would see everywhere the inverse of that principle: the comfort and pseudo-glitz of the typical modern interior in the rich world and the sterility, ugliness and squalor of the public domain. Today, as we face those great levellers – pollution, apocalyptic climate changes, congestion of skies and cities, the death of nature and everywhere ugliness – we know, as Ruskin foresaw, that the rich cannot escape the consequences of their 'wealth'.

Aesthetic order is dependent on moral and economic order. What is good architecture? Ruskin asked the burghers of Bradford who'd invited him – the greatest authority on art and architecture of the age – to advise them on the choice of an architectural style for their new Exchange. His lecture did not please them. Good architecture, it turned out, emerged from close observation of and inspiration by nature's forms; from a sense of divinity; and from the expression of a building's proper purpose, which is the enhancement of life and of community. Since he saw no signs of any of this in the operations of the money markets, he could find no basis for choosing a 'style' for their Exchange: 'Choose what you please,' he concluded.

Ruskin also foresaw the dangers of science and technology informed only by rationality and not by reverence – he saw that in tearing nature apart for material exploitation we might lose forever the profound truths of life revealed in it. His writings on nature are among his most beautiful and compelling.

Ruskin went gradually from being unhinged to being demented. So in his lifetime he also unwittingly played the role, essential to English conservative bourgeois society, of crazy revolutionary. His ideas were entertaining but were conveniently discredited by his eccentricity. Yet Ruskin's ideas have not only outlived him but also a whole century of social revolution, to take their place in post-modern thought.

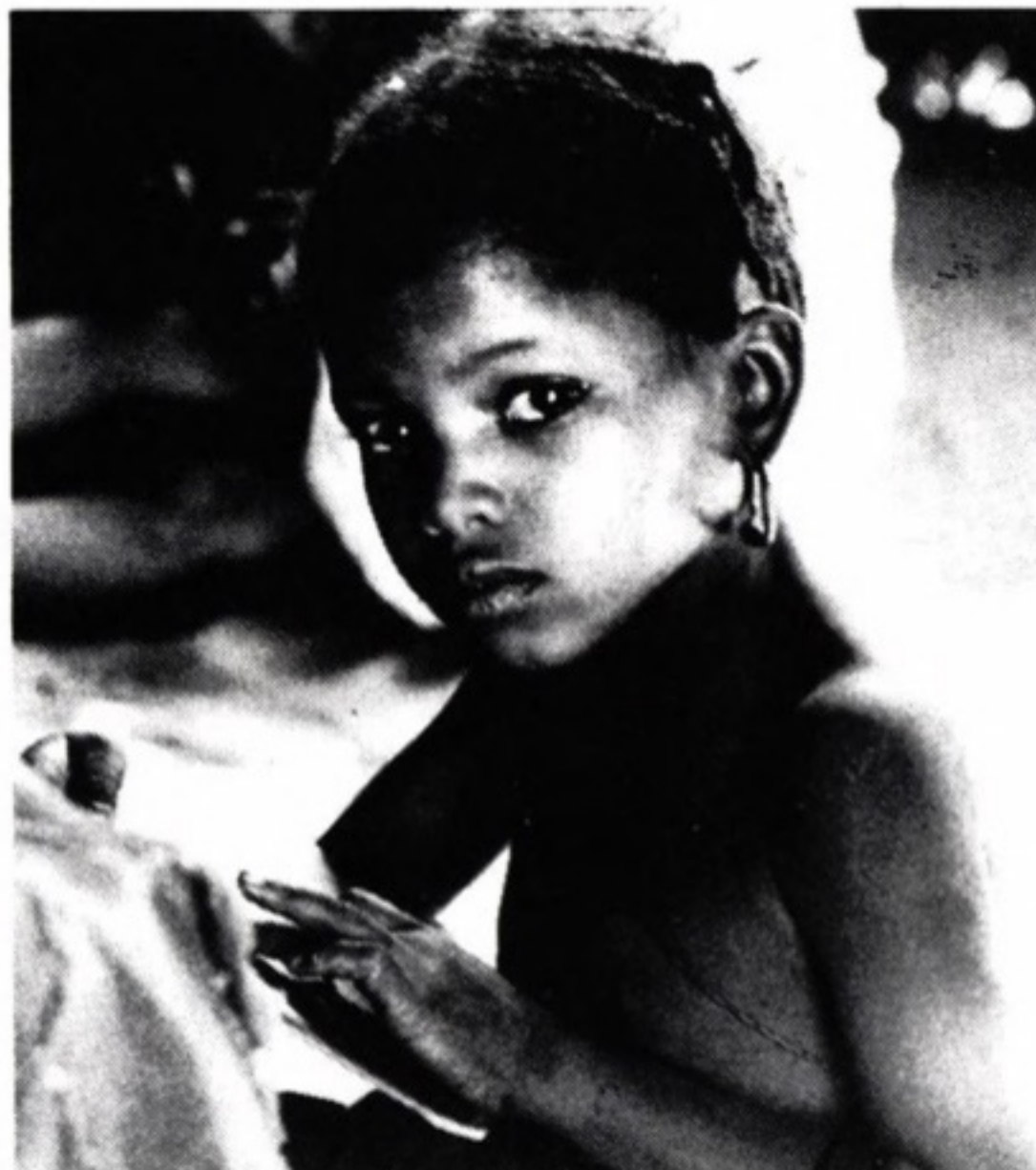
Judy Gahagan

**Ruskin Today** by Kenneth Clark (1964). Reprinted in Penguin 1988.



# Zaire

Photo: Philippe Billere/UNICEF



**Leader** President Mobutu Sese Seko  
**Economy** GNP per capita \$170 (US \$19,840)  
 Monetary unit: Zaire  
 Main exports: copper, crude petroleum, diamonds, cobalt and coffee.  
 Imports: machinery and transport equipment, maize, wheat and other foods, chemicals and mineral fuels, mainly petroleum.  
 Industry: manufacturing, mining, brewing, textiles. Crops: cassava, rice, plantain, maize. 70% of population in subsistence farming.  
**People** 34.5 million  
**Health** Infant mortality 81 per 1,000 live births (US 10 per 1,000)  
**Culture** Former Belgian Congo now suffering severe post-colonial decay.  
 Religion: Catholicism predominant, Protestant, local religions, Islam.  
 Languages: French official language, plus Lingala, Kiswahili, Tshiluba, and Kikongo.

Sources: *The Africa review 1990*, *State of the World's Children 1991*; *Europa Yearbook 1990*

Last profiled in November 1985

**'T**HE cock that leaves no hen unruffled' is the translation of Mobutu Sese Seko Kuku Ngbendu wa Za Banga, the full name assumed by President Mobutu in 1965. He is master of the cult of personality. The 'Supreme Guide', 'Father' and bearer of a self-awarded Oscar for Development has his portrait hung in every public place, printed on textiles and, before the reinstatement of the Church, at the altar.

But Mobutu, who seized power with a military coup in 1965, is popular because he has replaced violent uprisings and struggle for power following Independence in 1960 with 'unity' and 'peace'. For Africa's third largest country, riddled by a network of rivers, with a rainforest the size of Europe, and over 200 ethnic groups, such apparent stability is a feat which some believe can only be achieved by tyrannical rule and centralised government.

The alleged killings by police of 50 university students demonstrating in February 1990 against increased public

transport fares and inadequate study grants illustrates Mobutu's method of peace.

Zaire's corruption, most recently exposed by the Belgian press, has soured relations between Zaire and its former colonizer. But the leakage of funds, coupled with the country's lack of basic infrastructure, compounds Zaire's difficulties. Missionaries provide nearly all education and health facilities.

Though primary education is officially compulsory, only half the school-age population progress to secondary education. Of the girls, only about one third enrol; their sisters are kept at home to work the fields or care for siblings while the mother sells produce in the market.

'Education means equality and opportunity' is the rhetoric. But there are no state funds for fuel, building materials and the unreliable transport facilities that thwart development and domestic and international trade.

Though less than three per cent of the land is cultivated, its fertility guarantees subsistence living. Outside the cities, no-one need ever starve. Though AIDS is widespread, children die from more basic diseases like malaria, and malnutrition.

Transportation is appalling. *Office des routes*, the Government office responsible for the upkeep of roads, is aptly nicknamed *Office des trous* (of holes). Like hydro-electrics and diamonds, tourism is as yet untrammelled.

So tracking the Virunga mountain gorillas or voyaging up the Zaire river is an exercise in initiative and bribe-dodging. But, once you've caught the Zairian sense of humour and shuffled to their pulsating music, life, as pop star Papa Wemba would say, is rosy.

Genevieve Fox

## At a glance

\*\*\*\*\* Excellent  
 \*\*\*\* Good  
 \*\*\* Fair  
 \*\* Poor  
 \* Appalling

### INCOME DISTRIBUTION

Wide gulf between top earners and rest  
 1985: \*

### SELF-RELIANCE

Could be self-sufficient but now depends on imports  
 1985: \*\*\*

### POSITION OF WOMEN

No recognition of women's work  
 1985: \*\*

### POLITICS

Mouvement Populaire de la Révolution (MPR) sole legal party.  
 1985

### LITERACY

Women 53%  
 Men 79%  
 Gap also between urban and rural areas  
 1985: \*\*

### FREEDOM

No fair judiciary. Bribes and peremptory arrests  
 1985: \*

### LIFE EXPECTANCY

Low 53 years (US 76 years)  
 1985: \*\*



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☐ Please deduct this amount from my VISA/AMEX/DINERS/MASTERCARD No: \_\_\_\_\_

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**Long sleeves.** The same design, smaller, on a long sleeve, heavy undyed cotton shirt. Suitable for summer and winter.  
Ref:06041 Size XL only £11.95 (Shown below, left).

**Short sleeves.** Also available on natural cotton, short sleeved shirt.  
Ref:06033/06025 Sizes M/XL £8.95 (Not shown)



**ONE WORLD** Blue high quality tracksuit. Raised 'bubble' lettering.

**Sweat Shirt** Fleece lined. One roomy 46" size only. 50% cotton, 50% acrylic.  
Ref:08508 £19.95

**Trousers** With draw-string waist, design on left leg.  
Ref:08516 Medium (27"-32" waist) £18.50  
Ref:08524 Large (32"-36" waist) £18.50

**SAVE!** Buy the tracksuit set (sweat shirt plus either size of trousers) and save **£3.00**



# EXERCISE YOUR CONCERNS

**Solar power battery charger.** Place your batteries in this charger and set the adjustable lid to face the sun for recharging. Use only rechargeable batteries like those below.

**Rechargeable batteries.** Four RX6 batteries, suitable for personal stereos, clocks, torches and domestic appliances. Designed to replace 1.5V or 9V disposable batteries and capable of being re-charged up to 1000 times in the Solar Power Battery Charger.  
Ref:04162 £6.95  
Buy two sets, so one can always be recharging.



**BATHROOM FRIENDS.** Be green and clean. Try this pack of three bathroom friends from Revival. They contain no animal ingredients, are cruelty-free, biodegradable and natural. A percentage of the profits goes to Oxfam.

**Orange Grove Shampoo.** With extract of chamomile to give hair softness and sheen, plus oil of orange. 200ml.

**Sweet Orange Hair Conditioner.** Contains cocoa butter and almond oil to soften and strengthen hair, scented with essential oil of sweet orange. 200 ml.

**Citrus Fruit Body Shampoo.** To use under the shower. Extract of marigold and rosemary, scented with oil of grapefruit. 200 ml.  
Ref:04065 Set of three £6.70



**SAVE!** Buy the top and shorts and save **£2.00**

**RECYCLE Top.** Elegant ash grey T-shirt with turtle neck and long sleeves. Made from light, strong, close-stitched 100% cotton. One large loose size, 44" chest.  
Ref:07129 £13.95



**RECYCLE Shorts.** Heavy quality to prevent chaffing. Mid-length black shorts with fluorescent triangles on left leg. 100% cotton.  
Ref:07307 Medium (27"-32" waist) £13.50  
Ref:07315 Large (32"-36" waist) £13.50

THE ORDER FORM IS OVER HERE!

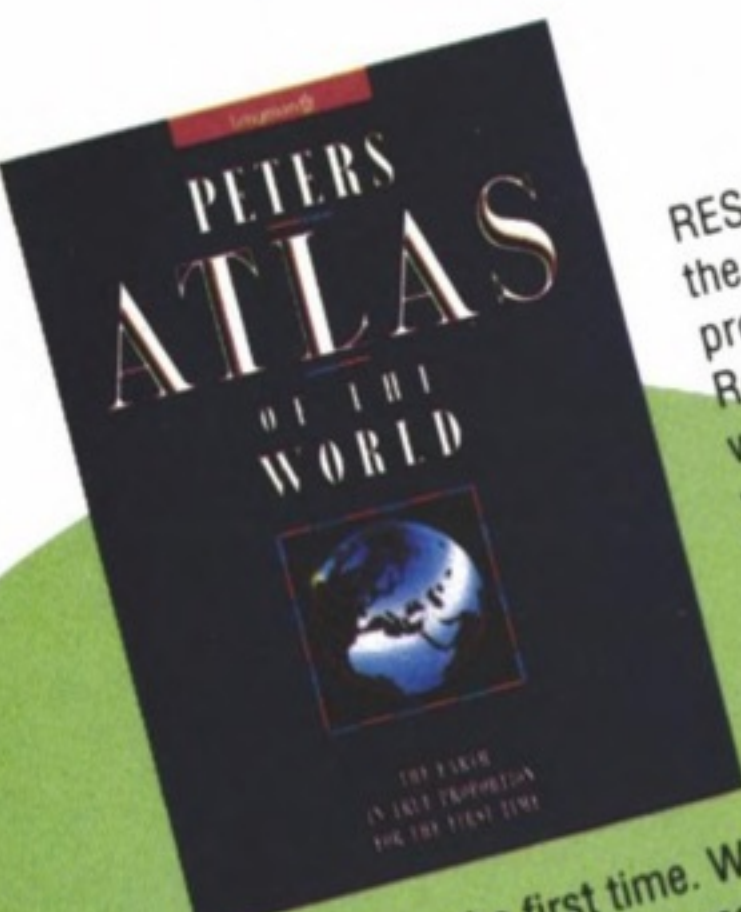


**SAVE OUR STRIPES** T-shirt. Subdued colours for adults, bright colours for children. Adults £8.50  
Ref:05509/05517 Sizes M/XL  
Children £6.95 Ref:05525 For 2-4 year olds  
Ref:05533 For 6-8 year olds  
Children's sizes slightly roomy, to allow for growth.

**SOS** Humans exploit animals; whether for hunting amusement, as fur coats or for unnecessary laboratory experiments. Take the tiger. There were over 100,000 at the turn of the century, now there are less than 8,000 in the wild.



SPRING  
1 9 9 1



**RESHAPE THE WORLD** – with the Arno Peters equal area projection World Map. Recognise mapmakers bias for what it is, and familiarise yourself with the countries, the seas and the rivers of our globe.

**PETERS ATLAS OF THE WORLD.** The earth in its true WORLD. The earth in its true representation of relief

relative proportion for the first time. With detailed thematic maps showing global data on specific subjects. An unrivalled reference source. Published by Longmans.  
Ref:01031 £29.99/\$68.95

**ARNO PETERS World Map Jigsaw Puzzle.** A delightful way to learn about the world. Both educational and fun. Giant size, 20" x 33", with guide map inside drum. 650 pieces.  
Ref:02003 £7.50/\$18.25

**PETERS WALL MAP OF THE WORLD.** As in the photo illustration, 20" x 33".  
Ref:01058 £2.50/\$4.95



**P**

**PRODUCTS**

**C**

**FOR CHANGE**

**THE NI FOOD BOOK** – Recipes from Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Middle East for Western kitchens. With country information and food facts. Now collected together in The NI Food Book are some of the Third World's tastiest dishes. This attractive publication features over 200 easy-to-follow recipes with starters, vegetarian dishes, meat and fish, salads and desserts. All the recipes have been tested and adapted for Western kitchens.  
Ref:01139 £9.99/\$19.95  
Canadian edition in conjunction with Second Storey Press



**NKOSI SIKEL' IAFRIKA (God Bless Africa)**  
Blue Heavy Sports Shirt. Attractive large bright calico label on a blue, fleece lined, unisex shirt. Collar and three buttons. One big size fits all, to a generous length. 50% cotton, 50% polyester mix.  
Ref:09040 £21.75  
Not available in North America.



**UNITY IS STRENGTH** T-Shirt. The images of the fish say it all. 100% combed cotton.  
Ref:08028/08001 Sizes M/XL  
£8.50/\$16.50



**JOIN THE RESISTANCE**  
T-shirt. Wear this famous photo, legacy of the anti-war movement which helped to end US occupation of Vietnam. White short-sleeved shirt. 100% combed cotton.  
Ref:06106/06122 Sizes M/XL £8.50/\$16.50



**THE LIGHT THAT'S SOFT ON NATURE!**  
Convert to long life, energy saving lightbulbs. They last six to eight times longer than an ordinary bulb and use a fifth of the electricity. The 11 Watt light bulb will save you more than £10 over its lifetime, despite the initial higher cost. They emit a soft, warm light and come with normal bayonet fittings. Particularly useful where lights are left on for long periods like halls and landings.



Ref:04510 7 Watt Stick light £18.70 (equivalent to 40 W). Ref:04529 11 Watt Stick light £18.70 (equivalent to 60 W). Ref:04537 7 Watt Globe light £22.70 (equivalent to 75 W)  
Ref:04545 15 Watt Globe light £22.70 (equivalent to 75 W)  
Not available in North America

● **BUYING INFORMATION.** See stitched-in order form for details. All sterling prices apply to UK. Dollar prices apply to Canada and the US. Canadian GST not included.  
**GUARANTEE:** If you are not happy with any of the products you order just return them within ten days for a replacement or money back, with no quibbles.